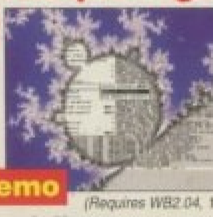
Issue 92 ■ November ■ 1995 ■ £3.99 Overseas price £4.25 Hfl 18.95

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the fastest Amiga text editor in the world

November 1995
AMIGA
Works with WB1.3, 1Mb
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Double software package
CygnusEd – *the complete commercial text editor*



Mand2000 demo (Requires WB2.04, 1Mb)
– stunning Mandelbrot program
PLUS: Text Read – excellent text viewer
IFFMaster – MUI IFF chunk manipulator

November 1995
AMIGA
Works with WB2.04, 1Mb
Graphics Grandslam!
Clouds – *animated cloud generator*
ATE – *Amiga PostScript font engine*
TiffView – *Multifunction image viewer*
PicView – *MUI image cataloguer*
TapAVI – *Windows video viewer*
Flick – *best Amiga FLI viewer*
PicBoot – *pictures when you boot up*
DataTypes: BMP – Newest version
FontDT – Amiga font DataType

DRACO!
The Amiga at the heart of a monster



PLUS
- Escom talks
- States of the nation
- Hypernauts
- Making money out of games
- Flicker fixer
- Zip drive

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floppy drives



3.5 super xl drive

The Super XL Drive allows you to store 3.5MB on a high density disk.

3.5 SUPER XL DRIVE **£129.95**



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The XL Drive allows you to store a 1.76MB on a high density disk.

1.76 XL DRIVE EXTERNAL	**£79.95**
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hisoft

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squirrel scsi interface included where you see this logo

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The award winning Power Scanner includes the following features: Scan in 24-bit at upto 200DPI (all Amigas not just AGA)*, Scan in 256 greyscales at up to 400DPI (all Amigas), Thru'port for printer connection, Fully supports AGA chipset, Display HAM8/24-bi images on a non-AGA Amiga (via image conversion), full editing facilities included. Works with 2.04 ROM or above, min 1MB (recommend 2MB).



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External IDE hard disk for the A500 comes complete with an internal ROM switcher, and upgradable to 4MB RAM

M-TEC AT500 BARE	**£99**
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MEMORY REQUIRES 30-PIN SIMMS

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Save 1.5MB on a standard floppy drive and 3MB when used in conjunction with the XL Drive 1.76.

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Disk Expander can add upto to 50% to your hard drive capacity and works with all drives including SCSI, IDE, Floppies and even the RAM disk. Disk Expander works on any Amiga with any Kickstart.

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SCSI case suitable for CD-ROM/HD/DAT and Optical drives.

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100MB DISKETTE	**£15.95**

ZIP DRIVE REQUIRES SQUIRREL SCSI INTERFACE

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VIDEO BACKUP SCART	**£65**
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amiga 4000

a4000 tower

new



The tower comes complete with 6 x 5.25" drive bays, 5 x 3.5" drive bays, 7 x Zorro slots, 5 x PC slots, real time clock and a 230 watt power supply.

A4000 TOWER **£349**

octogen scsi-2

SCSI-2 controller card for the Amiga 2000/4000. Upgradable to 8MB RAM.

OCTOGEN 2008 .... **£129**

aga flicker fixer

ScanDoubler II is a full 24-bit AGA flicker fixer which automatically de-interlaces all AGA screen modes and scan doubles non-interlaced PAL/NTSC modes to allow VGA monitors to display them. Supports VGA, S-VGA and Multiscan monitors. Pixel sharp picture, even at 1440 horizontal resolution and has a standard 15-pin VGA type connector. Comes with composite video/S-VHS outputs.

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TANDEM CD-DE **£69**

award winning amiga peripheral manufacturers

gvp products

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a4000 68060

A 68060 accelerator board for the A4000 running at 50MHz and allowing upto 128MB of user installable memory and a SCSI-II hard disk controller. The board can be configured with either 4MB, 8MB, 16MB or 32MB industry standard SIMMs.

A4000 68040 (0MB RAM) **£699**
A4000 68060 (0MB RAM) **£829**
4MB STANDARD ADD **£139**
4MB GVP ADD **£159**

a2000 68060

A 68060 accelerator board for the A2000 running at 50MHz and allowing upto 128MB of user installable memory and a SCSI-II hard disk controller.

A2000 68040 (0MB RAM) .... **£TBA**
A2000 68060 (0MB RAM) .... **£TBA**
4MB STANDARD ADD **£139**
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gvp ram

Official GVP RAM SIMMs.

4MB GVP RAM **£159**
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SCSI hard card which can fit 8MB of RAM on-board.

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Award winning Amiga Genlock.

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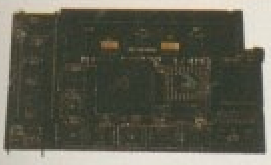
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INCL. PEN, CURSOR AND POWER TAB S/W



a500 68020ec

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NOT COMPATIBLE WITH GVP HARD DRIVE

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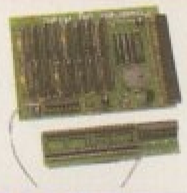


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Increase your Amiga 500/2000 chip RAM to a total of 2MB. MegaChip does this by using its own 2MB RAM and also now includes a 2MB Fat Agnus. No soldering is required.

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VIDEO GENLOCK

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All Power products come with a 12 month warranty unless otherwise specified.

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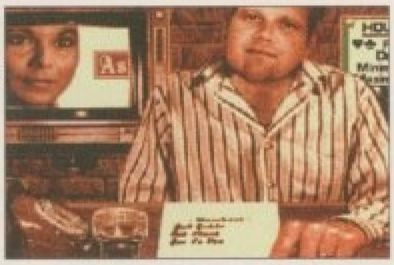
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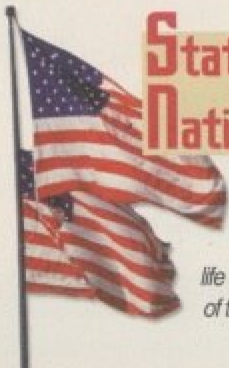


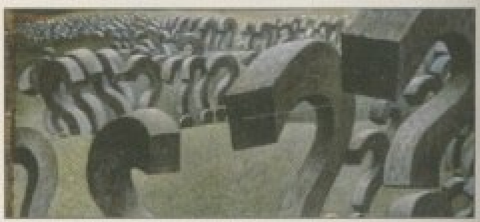
Club and Country see page 94













Next issue on sale 19 October

COVER STORY



The Amiga at the heart of a monster

Paul Austin fires up the nest step in Amiga evolution.

See page 38

THE COVERDISKS

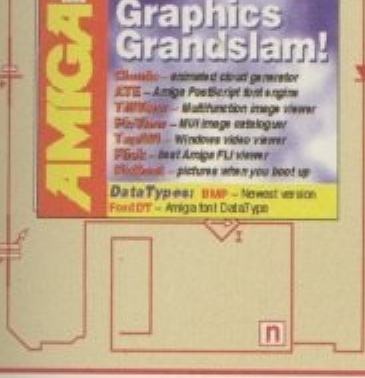
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CygnusEd

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Graphics Grandslam!

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AMIGA GUIDE







Subscriptions



Turn to page 82...

...for details of *Amiga Computing's* subscription offers this month

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Our unique and highly rated external Clock Cartridge will enable your Amiga to continually store the correct time and date in its own battery backed memory.
Simply plugs onto the back of the Amiga and does not invalidate the warranty.
Compatible with ALL Amigas



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A1200 trapdoor fitting memory expansions feature a battery backed clock and a socket for an accelerator FPU.

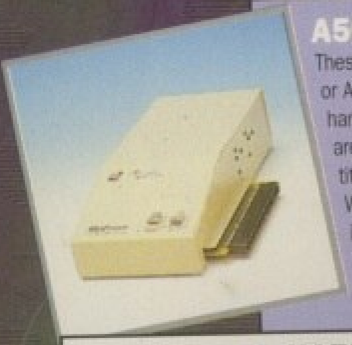


NEARLY DOUBLES THE SPEED OF THE A1200

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Full instructions and software supplied.
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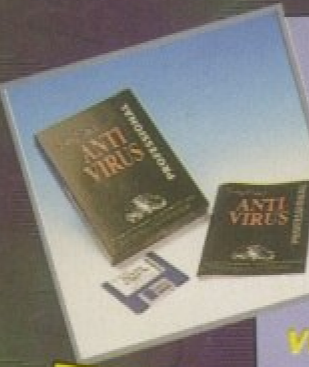
SPEAKERS
AIWA SC-C55



Top of the range 30 WATT Aiwa amplified speakers offer tremendous volume and sound definition. Features include ***SURROUND SOUND*** control and ***DYNAMIC SUPER LINEAR BASS***
Simply plug into the two phono plugs at the rear of the Amiga or into the headphone socket on your CD-ROM drive.

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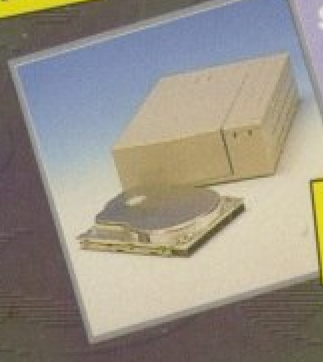


Discology is the ultimate in disk copying power for the Amiga. The package comprises the Discology Disk, manual and Discology cartridge for making copies of heavily protected programs with an external disk drive. Discology will also format disks, check disks for errors etc.

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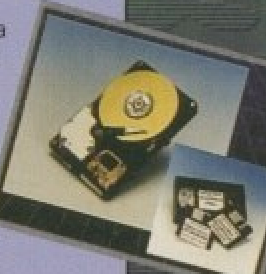
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- Fax Class I and II compatible, Group 3
- Hayes Compatible
- Full 80 page manual
- 12 Months guarantee

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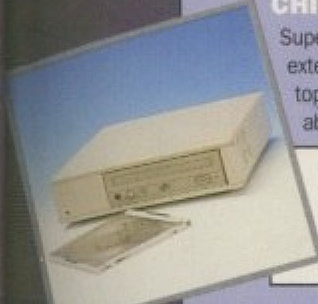
AIWA ACD-300

Top of the range external CD ROM drive. Suitable for use with any SCSI interface. Ideal with the Dataflyer SCSI+



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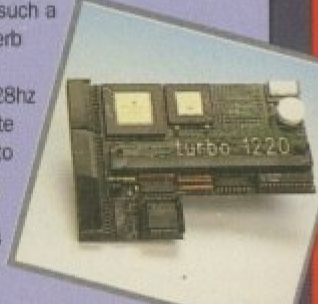
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QUAD SPEED CD ROM DRIVE £239.99 OR
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APOLLO A1200 ACCELERATORS

APOLLO 1220

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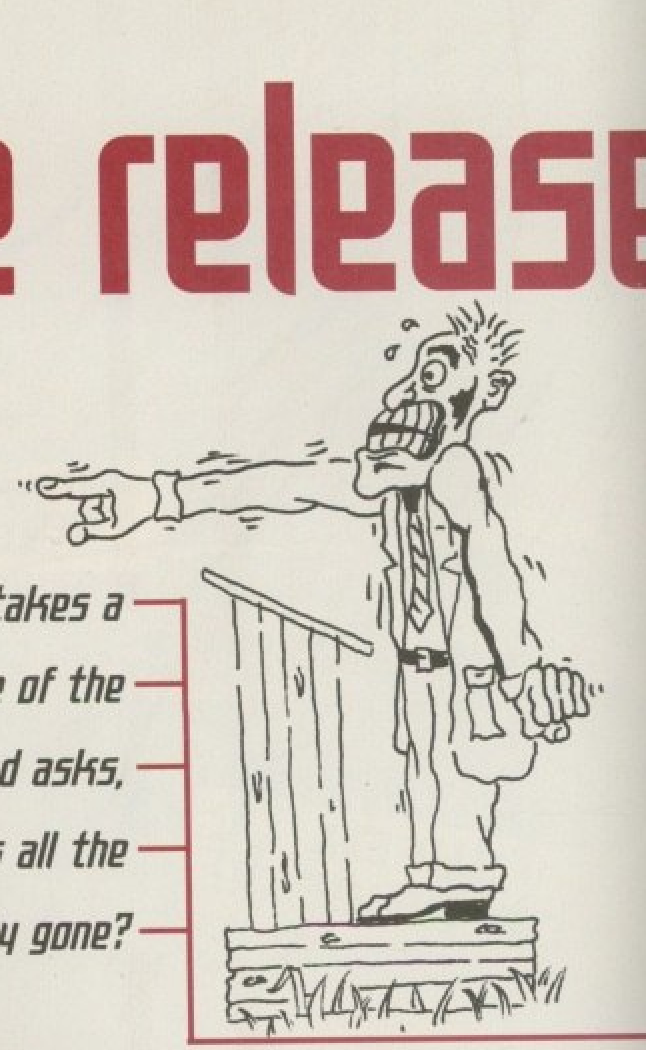
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Please release me...



Tina Hackett takes a look at the state of the games market and asks, where has all the originality gone?

You've probably already noticed, but the Amiga games scene is looking bleak to say the least. Releases are becoming few and far between, and it's a worrying trend for both Amiga owners and Escom. But what is far more alarming is the drop in quality of these games. And the originality. It's as if developers seem to think Amiga owners are just so *desperate* for games that they will gratefully lap up any old rubbish that is chucked in their direction. Graphics seem to have taken a step back in terms of quality, and it's little wonder that the average Amiga gamesplayer is left looking envious at some of the high-tech realism offered by the PC. Titles like Ruffian, Akira and Angst all look like games from the early '80s and do nothing but harm the image of the Amiga.

Graphics aren't the only factor on trial here either – originality seems to have been swept to one side as well. Football management games are churned out by the dozen, and okay, the good ones do sell well, but they really are becoming a very tested, uninspired old formula that has left the industry looking weary. Other genres need serious revamping too. Dull platformers, dull racing games and dull beat-'em-ups are all categories covered countless times, many with little or no imagination.

Looking at the back catalogue of Amiga games, you realise just how bad things have got. A few years, even months ago, the Amiga owner could choose from Triple A products like Flashback, Cannon Fodder or Theme Park. But now it's a different story and bar maybe four or five, there aren't too many titles on the release schedule that will excite your average gamesplayer.

It's not just a problem isolated to the Amiga though. PC games are falling into the dangerous trap of formulaic 'interactive movies' and while their graphics do astound, the playability has all the depth of a shallow puddle. So, things aren't all that rosy there either. But what explanation can there be for all this? Surely developers can't have just run out of ideas? If so why – there's a great big world out there. Get up from your computers, go and explore, be inspired.

Anyway, it's not the PC we should be concerned with here. It's the state of the Amiga market. Developers we could once rely on for original games have taken their talents elsewhere. Names such as LucasArts, Delphine and Bullfrog are sadly lacking from our shelves. Others like Sensible Software are soon to follow, and Escom are going to have to take responsibility for making sure there are good, *quality* developers out there working on original titles that the Amiga owner deserves.

And take the Doom clone phenomenon, for example. This is a good illustration of the nervous bandwagon-jumping that is also going on in the industry at the moment. It's as though the software companies don't have the guts to come up with their own products – they see a trend and follow it. What they should be trying to do is thinking of something of their own, rather than this attitude of trying to outdo each other. Why should Amiga owners want to go and buy a game that is trying to be a copy of one on the PC anyway. We don't *want* second rate PC titles, we want our own, original, quality games and we need our own software that will make the PC owner jealous of us for a change.

So I'll leave you with these final thoughts. One is for Escom, who have to ensure there are going to be good, original developers out there that will produce high quality products. The other is for the software companies themselves who must avoid this 'trend-following' approach and earn back some respect. Graphics need to feel like they belong in the next decade not the last, and the balance between presentation and playability must also be considered (remember Rise of the Robots and Microcosm?)

And the last and most important thought is for you, the Amiga owners. Don't give them the opportunity. Don't buy the substandard products, wait until there are some worthwhile titles there that really do deserve your time and money. AC

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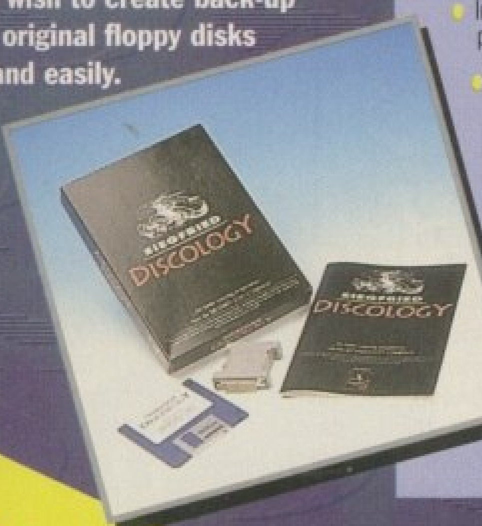
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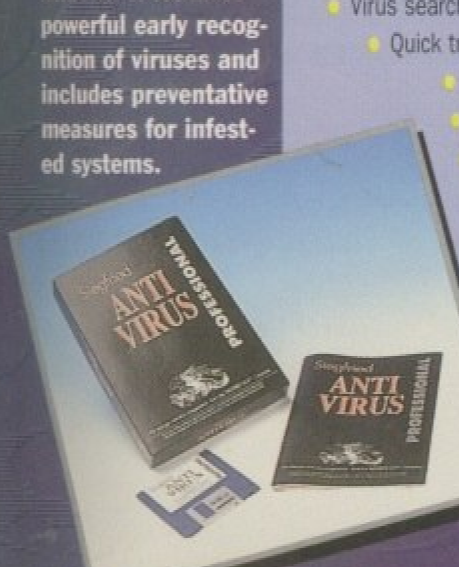
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NEWS

By Gareth Lofthouse

Amiga bundle revealed

Last minute news from Amiga Technologies revealed that the software to be bundled with the A1200 and 4000T will include the newest versions of some of the most acclaimed productivity packages available for the Amiga.

As reported in our press conference feature in this issue, there will be a standard A1200 package costing £399 and a A1200 plus hard drive package costing £499. Up to now, however, the contents of the software pack that will be bundled with the Amigas has been a mystery.

The standard pack will come with three applications from Digita: Wordworth 4SE, a brand new version of the award-winning wordprocessor, Datastore v.1.1. (a database) and Organiser v1.1, their recently released computerised filofax.

It will also include Turbocalc v3.5, an as yet unreleased version of Schtztruhe's spreadsheet program. On the artistic side, an updated version of Cloanto's highly regarded Personal Paint software – version 6.4 – will be accompanied by another Amiga showcase program, Photogenics 1.1 from Almathera. Despite the productivity focus of the package, games players are also catered for with the inclusion of Pinball Mania, a new title by 21st Century, and Whizz from Microvalue Flair.

The HD package will include the same bundle of software plus Scala MM300, the leading multimedia authoring package. The same bundle is currently set to ship with the 4000T as well, although there's a possibility that Scala's MM300 will be replaced by the upgrade, MM400.

Amiga Technologies clearly hope a strong bundle will put pay to complaints about the Amiga's pricing. Jonathan Anderson, MD of Amiga Technologies UK, claimed that the standard A1200 pack's software had a combined average street value of £497, while adding Scala for the HD version could save buyers as much as £677.

Anderson also said he was particularly pleased by their success in securing such up-to-date versions of each software product. He commented: "As far as I know, Wordworth, Personal Paint and Turbocalc are brand new products which the publishers do not intend to launch until next year."

The only possible bad news is for American users, since this bundle is only confirmed for European distribution. Whether Amigas sold in America will be standalone or have a different software package is still under discussion.

An announcement is also imminent on the identity of the two trade suppliers to be used by Amiga Technologies. According to CTW, the trade newspaper, Amiga Technologies have already appointed Amiga stalwarts SDL, and they are on the verge of signing Leisuresoft up as their other partner.



Tyschtschenko: the Amiga is on time for September

Amigas in America

While Amiga Technologies' plans for the UK are gradually becoming clearer, the strategy for the American market remains less certain. It has been announced, however, that Ed Goff, former US lawyer for Commodore, will be leading the company's US division.

It was made clear at the Heathrow press conference that Amiga Technologies considers the 4000T to have the strongest market in the US, although a smaller allocation of 1200s has been made.

The general manager of Amiga Technologies, Petro Tyschtschenko, revealed that the 4000T motherboards will be produced in the United States near Philadelphia, and computers marked for American distribution will be assembled in the same place.

At the time of going to press, the company was still looking for a North American partner that would be willing to support and invest in their product. We hope to bring our US readers fuller details as they are revealed.

Heathrow press conference

On Wednesday 16 August, Amiga Technologies held a press conference to officially announce the relaunch of the Amiga line of computers in the UK. The day after it was followed by a meeting with developers in which the company's UK strategy was outlined. The main news was the announcement of an A1200 bundle including a 170Mb hard drive priced at £499. For full details read the In The Hot Seat article featured in this issue.

It was also confirmed that the 4000T will initially be without a high density floppy disk drive. The reason given for this was the difficulty in obtaining components following the bankruptcy of the company involved in the production of the drives for the 4000 desktop unit.

Amiga exhibitionist



Following our focus on animators in last month's issue, the Amiga is due to receive another dose of creative talent following the announcement of an exhibition of work by artist Paul Hamilton on 4-28 October.

Named Artificial Eyes, the event will feature dye sublimation prints of the artist's recent Amiga artwork. His pictures were created using Photogenics, Real 3D and DPaint 4. "The name of the exhibition comes from the idea of looking at artificial scenes with, necessarily, artificial eyes – kind of photos that never

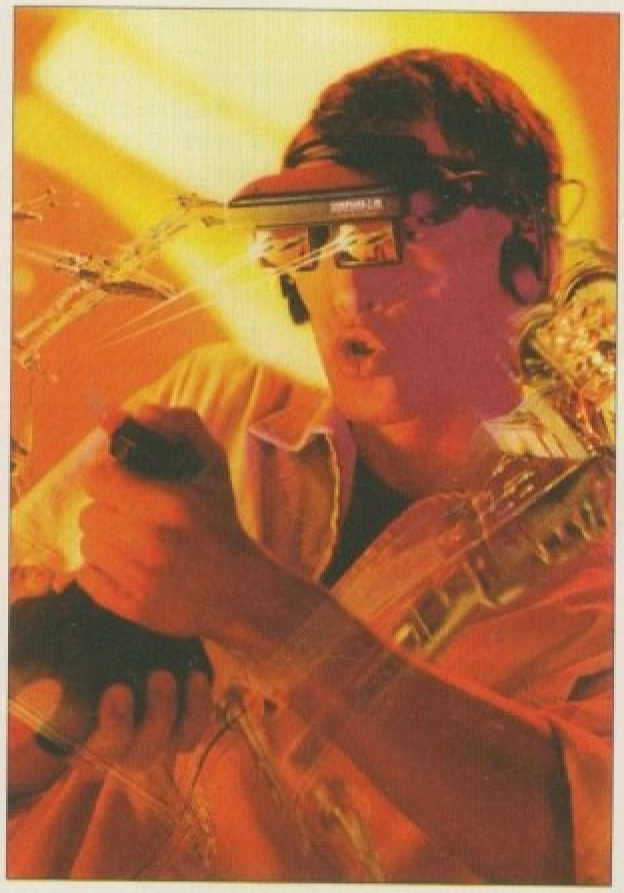
Power to accelerate

Power computing have joined the competition offering Amiga users more speed with the announcement of a new line of accelerators. Though the new Falcon range was developed by Macro Systems, Power Computing have bought exclusive distribution rights for everywhere, apart from Benelux and Germany.

Developed for use with the A1200, the first Falcon accelerator will feature an 040 processor – roughly 14 times faster, the same speed as an A4000 – and a single SIMM socket allowing for FastRAM expansion. It will also have a SCSI 3 interface allowing for greater transfer speeds , and the package will include a fan to cool the board.

An 060 version is set to follow which will give the A1200 a blistering performance, but prices on either option are yet to be announced. For more details phone Power Computing on 01234 273000.

The eyes have it



As well as presenting its strategy for the Amiga's relaunch at the Heathrow press conference, Amiga Technologies also unveiled the new virtual reality I-glasses for the first time in the UK.

As reported last month, the Virtual I-glasses are made in America by Virtual i-0, but Escom have exclusive distribution rights for the product in Europe. Newly revealed, however, was the fact that there will be two different models on the market. The virtual reality headsets don't come cheap though. The basic video model that allows users to see computer and film images in 2D and 3D will cost £599, while a PC version including a head-tracker for use with 3D games will cost £899.

Escom stated that the range of applications for the headsets is almost unlimited. At the press conference it was claimed that the makers are already in discussions with film moguls like Steven Spielberg, and they have shown great interest in the technology's potential.

There are also plans to develop a version of the headset for use in dentist's surgeries. Instead of lying with their eyes screwed up in terror, patients will be able to relax watching a film while the dentist drills away at their teeth. Apparently they are already being used in the US for this purpose.

"Our product gives patients an out-of-mouth experience by taking the focus away from what the dentist is doing," said Virtual i-0 President Linden Rhoads. "They enable people to watch movies, educational programming and even play video games while they have their teeth worked on."

The AT panel went on to reveal that the lightweight headsets made them ideal for the private viewing of erotic movies, but whether this capability will be combined with the dentist's version is currently unclear.

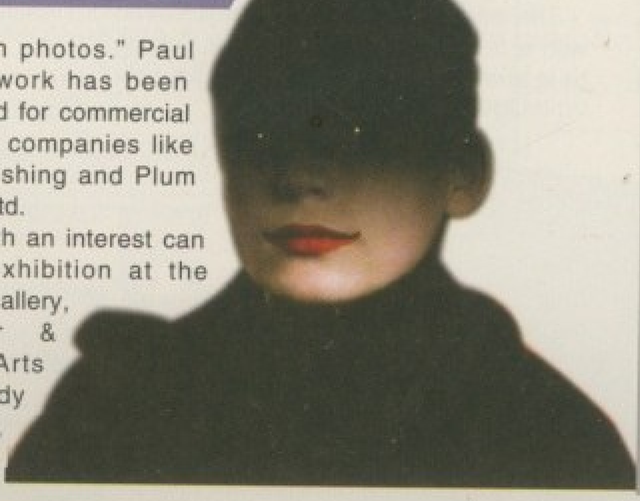
The video version of the glasses will connect to the Amiga's composite output port. As yet, the head-tracker version has no software support on the Amiga, however.

Asked if they planned to sell the product in the UK, major retailers Silica replied that they had not made any decision on the matter. MD John Arundel would not discount the possibility, however. "If it's a product that supports the Amiga then we will certainly be interested in taking it," he commented.

were," Paul explained. "Also on a literal level, I seem to have an obsession with painting over people's eyes when working with photos." Paul Hamilton's work has been commissioned for commercial purposes by companies like Quarto Publishing and Plum Productions Ltd.



Anyone with an interest can go to the exhibition at the Reflections Gallery, the Exeter & Devon Arts Centre, Gandy Street, Exeter.



News briefs

For football fanatics

Football Statistician Professional may sound like another team management game, but it's actually the ultimate football application for use by the home enthusiast and professional club, according to its makers.

Available for the Amiga at £19.95, the League Monitor software will store league results, analyse them in tables and graphs, and follow your favourite team's performance.

The program might just win you a fortune as well, thanks to its ability to make pools predictions on the basis of teams true form. Call OTM Publications on 01827 312302.

Imagine all the objects

The Imagine user group is running a special offer for readers of *Amiga Computing*. The price of membership has been reduced from £8 to £5 until 2 January 1996, and the first 100 readers to join quoting *Amiga Computing* will get a free disk containing brush maps, objects and other material for use with the Imagine rendering package.

Members can benefit from a wide range of services, according to group founder Spencer Jarvis, including an object and attribute finding service, quarterly newsletters, and unlimited technical support. The group has a library of 2000 objects, 60Mbs of text, 1000 attributes, and hundreds of brush maps available to members.

For more information contact Spencer Jarvis on 01375 670036/0585 102633

Apologies to Active

Active software are owed an apology for an error made in the review of their Zoom CD. The telephone number that should have been given was 01325 352260.

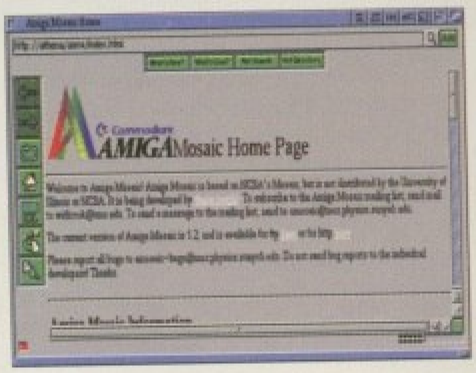
Active also report that further enhancements are being made to the time of going to press.

Amigas meet the public

On 26 August to 3 September, Amiga Technologies presented the Amiga to the public for the first time since Commodore's demise 18 months ago at the IFA fair in Berlin. The company bought space in which to present not only the Amigas but also the CD32 in different configurations running various applications.

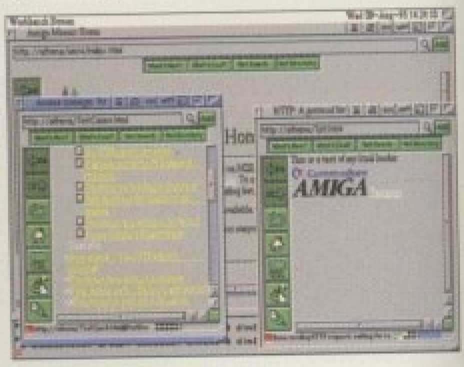
The event is seen as important by industry commentators concerned that the Amiga's relaunch is not gaining a high enough profile. Petro Tyschtschenko previously announced at a press conference in August that there were no plans to advertise the Amiga until 1996.

New web navigator



Amiga web users who are tired of hearing about the wonders of the Netscape Internet software will be pleased by the announcement of a more powerful browser designed solely for the Amiga. Designed by the makers of AMosaic, not only does it promise to improve vastly on its predecessor, but it also offers features unavailable on the much vaunted PC/ Mac rival.

A browser is the software that makes navigating the Internet a graphically appealing and user-friendly experience, but up to now Amiga users have had to use the relatively slow AMosaic. Named IBrowse, the new Amiga software is claimed to be up to 30 times faster according to the latest reports from its developers. It will also be packed with advanced features, including the ability to use multiple windows to a greater extent than AMosaic. It will support HTML 1-3 and Netscape commands which will allow for a full viewing of sites previously limited for Amiga owners.



Like Netscape, it will come with a powerful point and click tool bar, but the interface will have the added advantage of being fully configurable which will allow users to customise the package to suit their needs. It will also start up without the need to launch AmiTCP first.

Perhaps the best news of all is that the program is likely to be released as shareware. We hope to feature the program in *Amiga Computing*'s December issue, but in the mean time readers can get further information at the following web site: **http://www.omnipresence.com/ibrowse/**

Knight raises standard

White Knight Technologies is continuing to give high-end Amiga users strong support, with announcements this month of new products and services. Recently appointed as Macrosystem's official UK distributor, they will be selling the Draco digital video system featured as this issue's main story.

In the future, they will also be distributing a new 32-bit version of VLAB motion, the acclaimed Amiga editing card for video. WKT claim it will offer far greater video data transfer rates, lower Jpeg compression ratios and generally far superior picture quality than can be achieved on the current Amiga version.

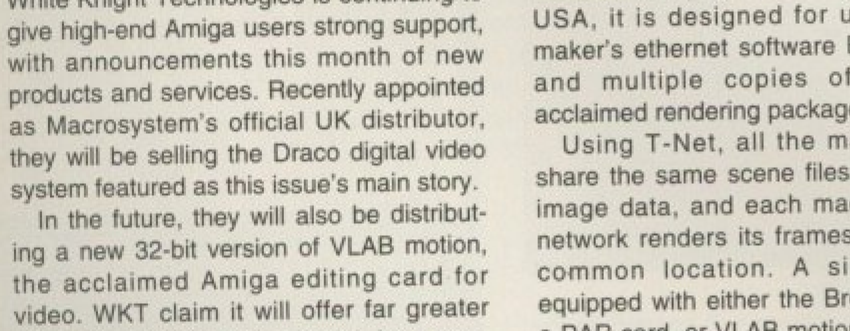
White knight now have a demonstration suite at their offices in Hertfordshire which will allow customers to test out a non-linear video editing system incorporating not only VLAB motion but also the Toccata sound card and the Retina graphics board. Customers who wish to test these products are invited to telephone for an appointment.

They are also offering a new product for serious LightWave users. Named T-Net, it will allow users to distribute the task of rendering a number of frames from many scenes on LightWave over a network of Amigas. Made by Interworks USA, it is designed for use with the maker's ethernet software ELAN-DFS 2 and multiple copies of NewTek's acclaimed rendering package.

Using T-Net, all the machines will share the same scene files, objects and image data, and each machine on the network renders its frames to a shared common location. A single Amiga equipped with either the Broadcast Elite, a PAR card, or VLAB motion can then be used to output the rendered sequences to video tape.

According to WKT, the software's powerful features will allow users to efficiently manage and delegate the distribution of frames across the network. It will be possible to monitor the progress and status of each system on the user's 'render farm' at a glance using a graphic representation of each node showing its current rendering status.

The price is set for £299 for a T-Net with a 5 user license. For further details or to arrange to see a demonstration, call White Knight on 01920 822321.



The all-new 32-bit Vlab Motion, soon to be shipping from MacroSystems

New world order

Another company reasserting its support for the Amiga market is Blittersoft, with the announcement of a number of products to be released in the near future.

Fans of virtual world designers will be pleased to hear World Construction Set 2 is likely to be reviewed in the next issue of *Amiga Computing*. The terrain modeller/animator will use a non-modal interface, allowing users to work in multiple windows to lay out motion paths, adjust colours, and modify ecosystems. The price is set for £119.95.

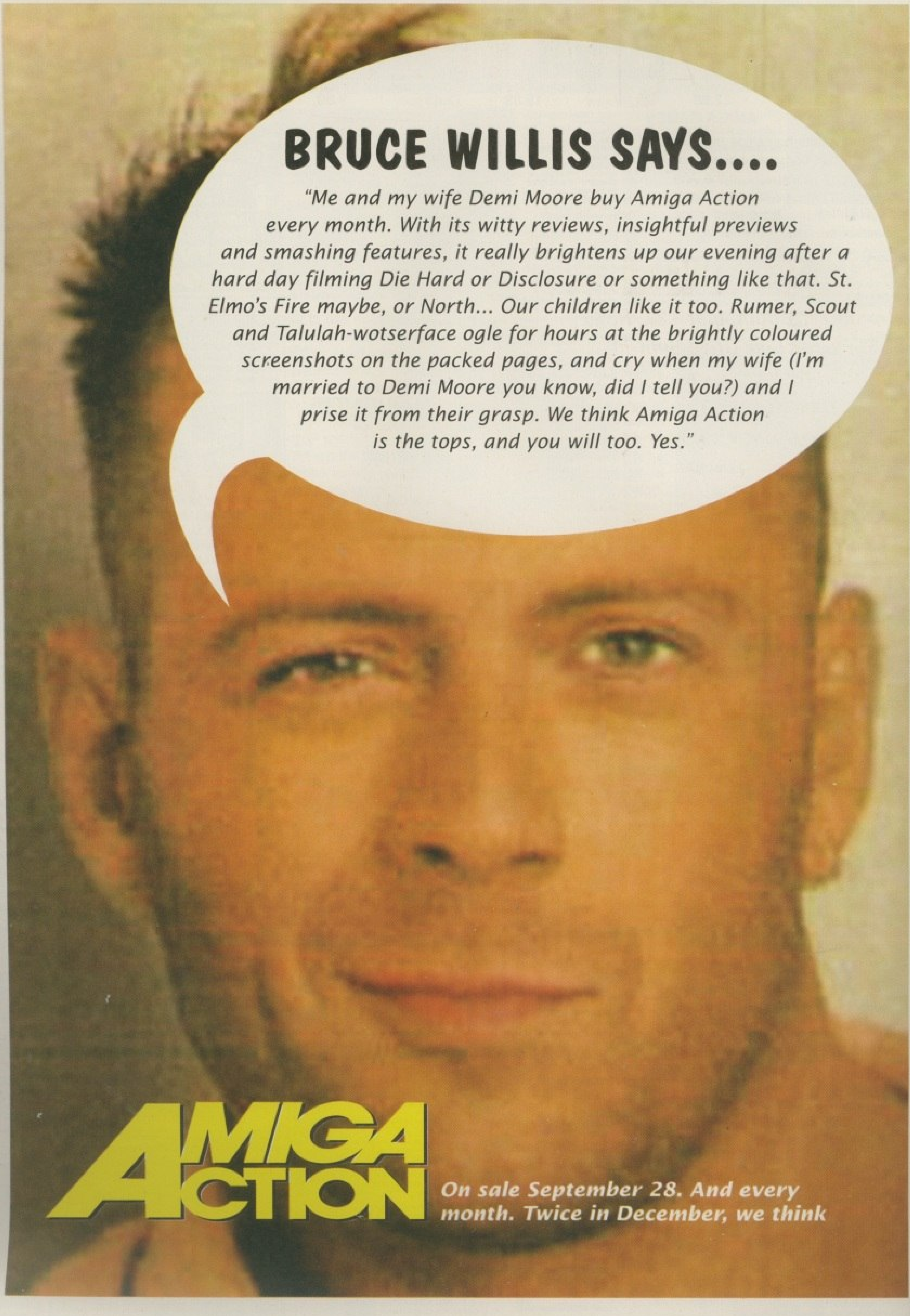
Blittersoft are also releasing ATAPI.device for £69.95, a product that allows users to attach the extremely cheap ATAPI CD-ROM drives to their A4000s and A4000Ts IDE controller.

With new Picasso II graphic board bundles available with prices ranging from just under £300 upwards, plus the fact that they're making AmiTCP available directly in the UK, Blittersoft are bringing some much needed activity to the Amiga market. For more details call them on 01908 261466.

Amigas for Uganda

Dr Andrew Basden, inventor of the INCA Expert System featured in our September issue, is starting a new initiative to send Amigas to Uganda for educational purposes.

According to Dr Basden , the Amiga is the best machine for the job because it can just be plugged into a TV without requiring a monitor. He is hoping that people with unwanted Amigas or even components will send them in for the appeal. Those with the remnants of an unused A500 at the back of a cupboard somewhere should write to Dr Basden at 24, Penrith Close, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 7ND.


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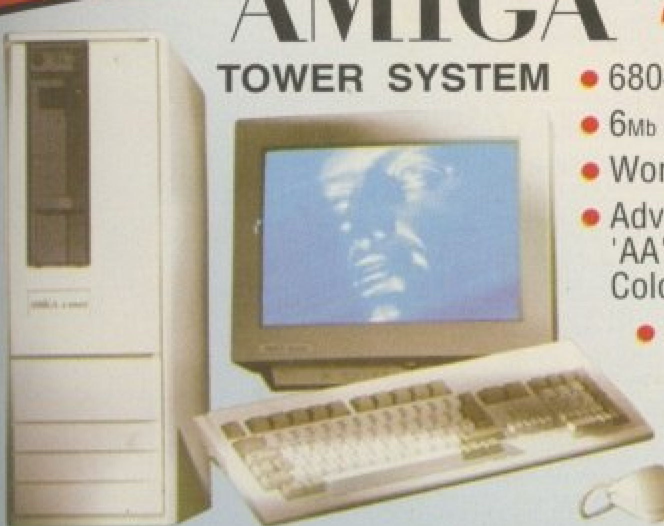
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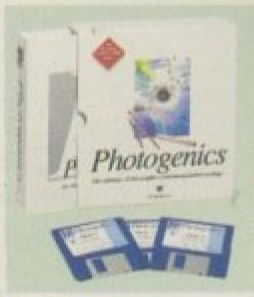
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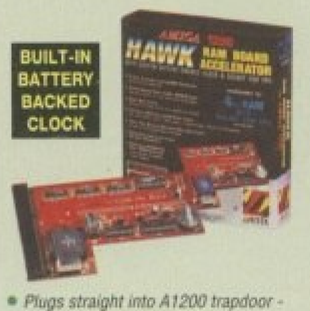
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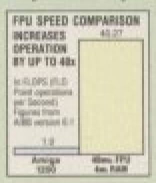
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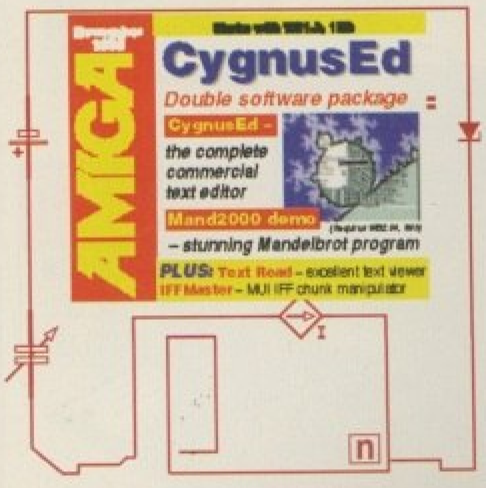
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THE Cover

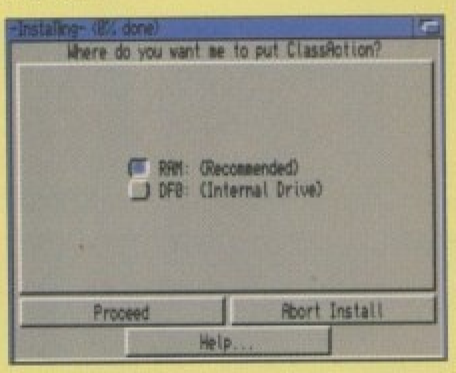
Ed'able goods

Extracting CoverDisk files

If you have already booted this month's CoverDisks, you may have noticed a slight change to normal. We are now using Commodore's installer utility to try and make extracting the archives as easy as possible for you.

To extract any single archive, simply double-click its icon and follow the on-screen instructions. If you want to quickly extract the program to RAM, select the NOVICE level on the welcome screen and press proceed once on the current screen, and then again on the next. The program can now be found in your RAM disk.

You also have the option of using a floppy disk. If you pick this option make sure you have a blank formatted disk at the ready, and if you only have one disk get ready for lots of disk swapping and a long wait.



The Amiga installer needs to be told where to extract the files to. Simply click on the appropriate destination

CygnusEd

Author: CygnusSoftware
Workbench: 1.3

A good text editor is essential for every Amiga owner. From just being able to alter your user-startup to writing your e-mails, you cannot get away from the need for this essential utility. Let's face it, the standard Ed that comes with Workbench is pretty feeble in both the power and looks department, with Commodore doing a typical good job of ignoring all its own style guides.

CygnusEd purports to be the fastest text editor available for the Amiga, and probably any computer. Once you have tried it I am sure you will agree that whether you are writing a ten line e-mail or need to view a 10,000 line manual, CygnusEd will let you happily jump to any point in the text, read, write and modify the file in a blink of an eye. Even your basic A600 will handle kilobytes of text without breaking into a sweat.

I am sure most of you are quite proficient with using a keyboard and the language of your choice, and with these basic skills you should find CygnusEd a doodle to use and should be able to produce reams of text in no time at all.

As CygnusEd has evolved over the last eight years it has picked up some pretty impressive and very useful features along its way. Potentially one of the most useful or lifesaving functions is the extremely comprehensive undo/redo option. Basically, CygnusEd has an unlimited undo buffer, only restricted by how much memory you want it to be able to use.

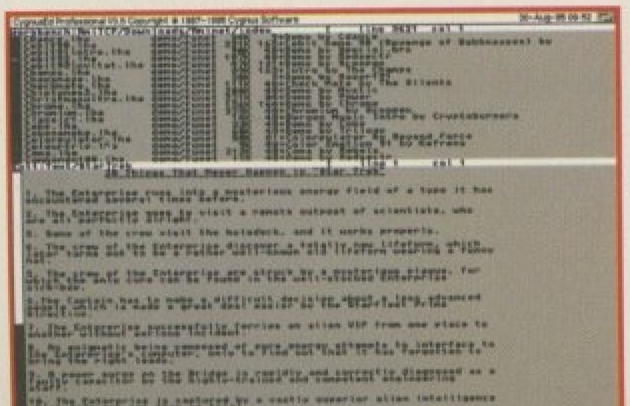
Most editors at the most only allow you to undo/redo the last action or line worth of text. Well there's none of this pussy footing about for CygnusEd. If you have a big enough undo buffer you could delete every line from a text, and then simply by pressing right Amiga u you can watch as the entire text magically reappears line by line in front of your very eyes.

ADJUSTMENTS

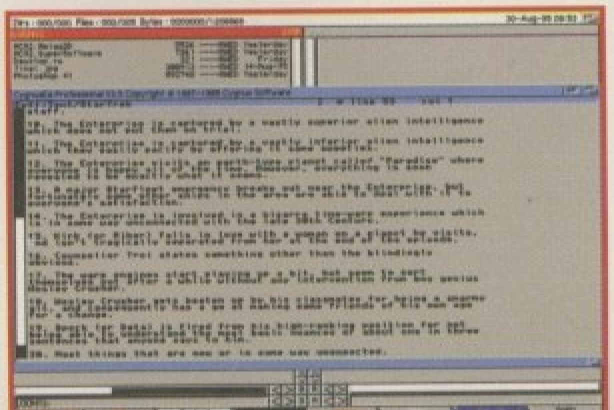
The Environment menu in CygnusEd actually consists of three 'hidden' menus, letting you adjust almost every aspect of the editor – from the typical options of screen size, font type and word wrap to the more unusual ones such as letting you adjust the screen scroll borders and the exact tab positioning.

Another unusual feature is the way CygnusEd handles multiple files. If you choose to open another document the CygnusEd screen will split into two, allowing you to view and edit both at the same time. This is very handy if you need to look at some reference material while doing some writing, and is better than having to resettle with multiple windows.

For all you people out there with Workbench 2 or above you are going to be able to take advantage of CygnusEd's comprehensive ARexx port. Now, most people might be wondering what's the point of an ARexx port on a text editor? Well for starters, any



CygnusEd allows multipal views



Workbench 2 users can open CygnusEd on any public screen

-Disks

Amiga Computing *brings you another full commercial product – CygnusEd, the fastest text editor you can buy. Also included is the best selection of this month's Aminet downloads*

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programmers out there will be able to get CygnusEd to automatically save and compile the current program they are working on, all from the comfort of CygnusEd. If you wanted, you could get it to save off different versions each time you compile.

Possibly of more interest to Joe Bloggs is the fact that CygnusEd has a versatile macro function which lets you record a number of different keystrokes and menu functions which can then be repeated over and over again. What is the point in that? Well, I will tell you. If you have a long list that needs reformatting, why should you have to do the same thing for every line? All you have to do is record a macro, showing what you want to be repeated for each line. Once that is done you can then get CygnusEd to do all the hard work by it repeating the macro for each and every line.

TOTAL SUPPORT

Included with the CygnusEd package are a number of support programs – Ed, MacEd and RecoverCED files. Ed is a small program that can be used to launch the main CygnusEd executable. You do not have to use this to run CED, but if you use it there are a number of advantages. Firstly, it allows you to run CygnusEd in a dormant state, meaning the main CED window will not appear. Then, when you want to use CED it will appear straight away. Using Ed, it is also possible to load a file directly into a copy CED that is already up and running.

MacEd has nothing what so ever to do with Macs, you will be glad to know. It lets you create and modify CygnusEd's macros away from the main program.

Finally, RecoverCED files is a handy little program which, if your machine crashes while you are working on a document, will try its best to recover those files. It is not guaranteed 100 per cent, but any chance of getting lost files back is better than none at all.

If you are having problems with any of CygnusEd's functions then there is an extremely comprehensive AmigaGuide document detailing every aspect of CygnusEd. Other than that, the best way of finding out about CygnusEd's functions is just to try out all of those lovely menu items. ➤

Mand2000

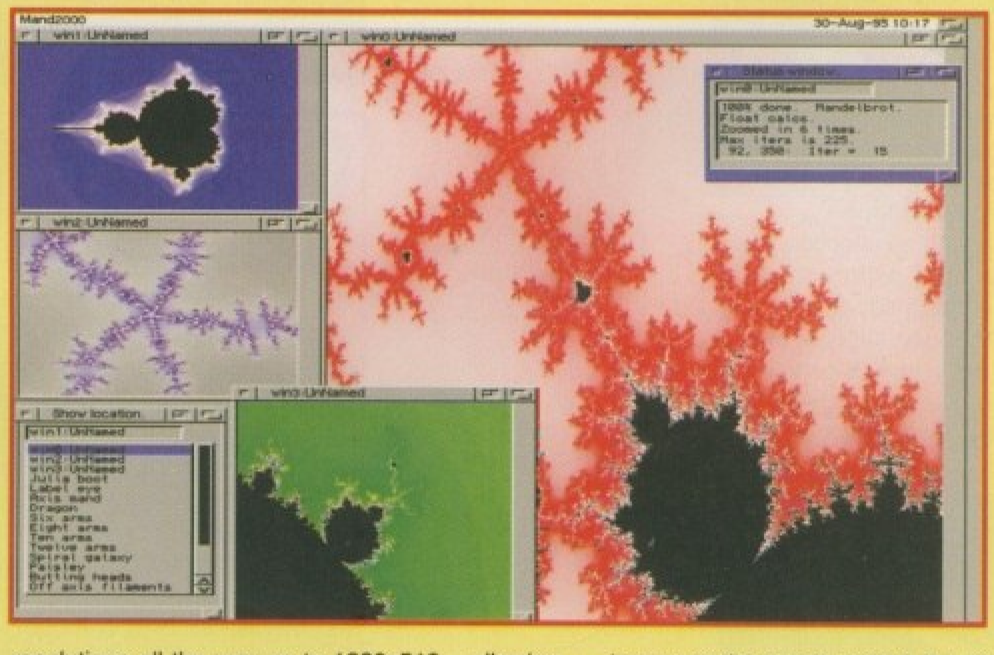
Author: Cygnus Software
Workbench: 2.04

Mand2000 has to be the best fractal exploration program available for the Amiga computer. It provides a super simple interface combined with a stupifyingly fast screen update.

Exploring a fractal in Mand2000 is simply a matter of double-clicking where you want to go and you will instantly zoom into the area you chose. If you want to decrease the zoom amount just press the D key, and you zoom straight out. Also, if you want to move to a slightly different position, simply click on the Mandelbrot and slide the area to where you want it.

One of the impressive parts of Mand2000 is the window approach it takes. You can literally have dozens of separate fractal windows open all showing different parts of the Mandelbrot set – you can even have a separate window open showing what part of the Mandelbrot you are currently looking at. The program is not restricted to only the Mandelbrots as it will also allow you to explore the Julia set.

If you own an AGA machine, Mand2000 lets you access a bewildering number of screen modes, supporting Ham8 and Ham6 screens resolutions all the way up to 1280x512 – allowing every window you open to have its own separate palette.



Probably the best Mandelbrot explorer in the world – even works on graphics cards

The real problem with trying to explore fractals is that the deeper you go into them, the longer it takes to produce each screen. Mand2000 give you a number of options to allow you to preview or speed up the screen drawing process. Firstly, you can change the number of iterations the computer will perform – decreasing the number of iterations increases the screen speed, but reduces detail.

The other option you can use is the number of passes Mand2000 will make to draw the screen. The effect is that on the first pass the picture is highly pixelated, with each successive pass adding more detail to the screen. If you only want a rough idea of what you are looking at this is an excellent feature because you can interrupt the drawing process and keep on moving around the fractal.



Clouds

Author: Krzysztof Kobus
Workbench: 2.04

To quote the author: "Clouds is the first program on the Amiga platform giving you visual modelling and realistic animation of the turbulent motion of clouds. It is based on spectral synthesis method. The method employs a variety of intuitive parameters describing natural properties of clouds phenomena, as cloudiness, contrast, wind direction, strength of wind, and turbulent changes.

"Such a wide range of controls allows a creative animator to generate all kinds of clouds, gases, mists and so forth. Resulting images can then be used as backgrounds, textures in 3-D programs, or alpha channel information – to mention just a few possibilities."

Blimey, sounds pretty impressive does it not? Basically, Clouds will produce beautifully animated clouds that will roll across your screen with such majesty, you will be instantly relaxed. Well, I feel better already.



Animate clouds with Clouds

PicBoot

Author: Magnus Holmgren
Workbench: 2.04

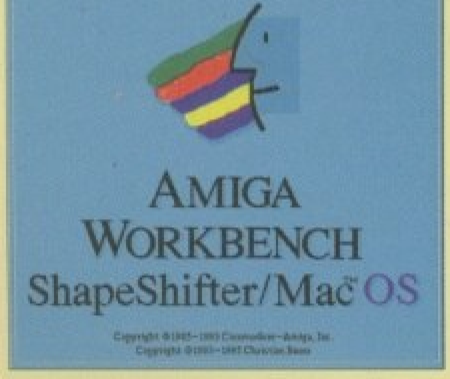
Every one must have seen the Windoze startup picture, with the little blocks all evaporating away. It may seem a trivial point but it's quite nice to have some sort of picture to look at while you wait for Workbench to load.

Commodore may not have seen a reason for including some sort of boot picture, but from all the small utilities and the number of boot pictures that pop up on the Aminet, most of us seem to want one. A boot picture that is.

PicBoot was one of the earliest boot picture utilities I can remember. This latest version provides you with load of options. For starters, it can handle both GIF and IFF files, and the routine that unpacks them is extremely fast – so the time it takes to boot up your computer is not changed too much.

If you use the xpk compression libraries, PicBoot will even handle IFFs that have been compressed. It is also possible to fade in and out your chosen picture, which looks quite flash, and will even fade in Workbench if you so wish. AGA owners will also have the benefit of a silky smooth 24-bit fade.

All you people with a collection of different possible boot pictures will be pleased to know that PicBoot can use a script file to randomly choose one of the pictures. So you will never get bored with the same picture being flicked up every time you boot your machine.



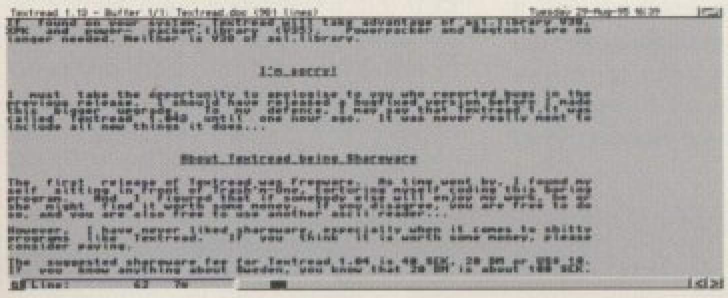
Banish that blank boot screen and add a little colour to your life with BootPic

Text Read

Author: Martin Blom
Workbench: 2.04

Slagging off the standard Commodore utilities is always a favourite hobby of mine and it has to be said that 'more' is pretty dire. What you need is a decent text reader. Well lo and behold, it looks like Martin Blom had the same idea.

Text Read is a powerful style guide compliant text reader and will happily handle xpk'ed and power packer files. Some of the nice features of Text Read are the search facility, jump to line/percentage, and a handy scroll bar to let you quickly scan through any document. It is also possible to specify what font and screen mode you want, and print and save of the current document.



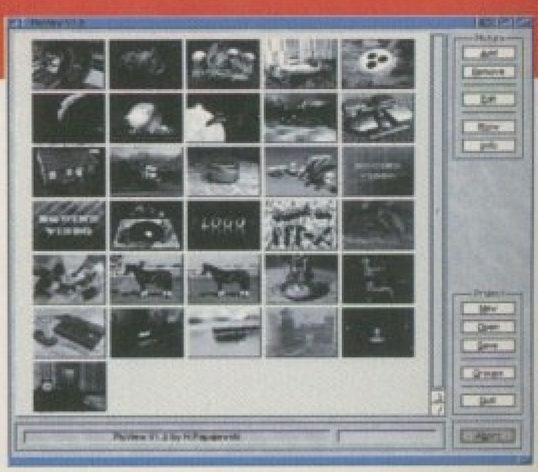
A decent text reader is an invaluable addition to anyone's utility collection

Pic View

Author: Holger Papajewski
Workbench: 3.0
Magic User Interface

This could be just the thing for anyone with a large catalogue of pictures on their hard drive, or any of the picture CDs that are floating around the PD house at the moment.

Pic View allows you to produce a catalogue of all your pictures. It is very simple to operate as you use the file requester to select which pictures you wish to catalogue, and go. For each picture a thumb nail, grey-scale representation is produced.



This powerful picture cataloguer will let you quickly access all your collection

Once the catalogue is made, you scroll through the list of images and double-click on an images to display that particular picture, or just get certain information about the picture – such as its size, name and where it is. If you have a large collection, it is possible to group related pictures together, making finding a particular image much easier.

Pic View uses datatypes to import the various pictures, so whatever picture datatypes you have, pic view will handle. Currently, that could include IFF, PCX, BMP, Jpeg, Targa, Mac Paint, Tiff, PNG and even Klondike card sets.

ATE

Author: Gordon Fecyk
Workbench: 2.04

Amiga Type Engine allows you to use the plethora of outline fonts that are available in the commercial and public domain. Essentially, it allows you to access Adobe type 1 and 3 outline fonts just as though they were normal Amiga bitmap or Compugraphic fonts.

All you need to do to use ATE is copy any postscript fonts you have into the PSFont drawer and voilà, next time you pop up a font requester there will be a host of new fonts available for you to use, in any of your art or writing packages, or just for Workbench.

The only font provided with ATE is called funky font – it's not too useful but will give you an idea of how ATE works. There are plenty of disks and CDs that have shareware PSfonts on them, and if you got our cover CD there was a complete section devoted to fonts, so you should now have a completely new selection of fonts at your disposal.

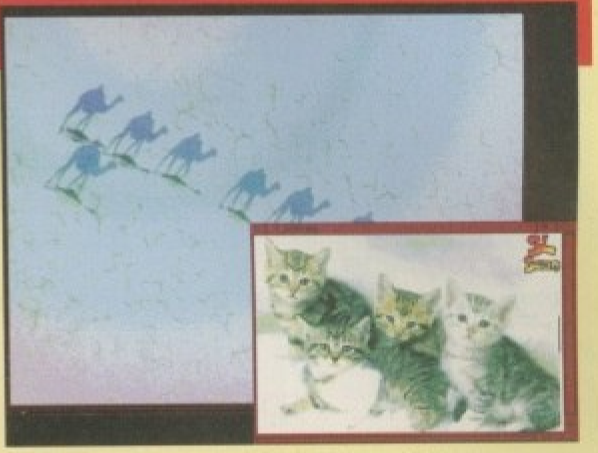
Tiff View

Author: Bert Wynants
Workbench: 2.04

If you remember, last month we had a Tiff datatype on the CoverDisk. Well, from the same author we now have Tiffview. The title of the program is a little misleading because as well as being able to view Tiff files, there are a whole host of options and functions available for you.

For starters, Tiffview directly supports IFF, Tiff, Jpeg, GIF and MacPaint picture formats, as well as any datatypes you may have. You then have a whole choice of display options. Firstly, you can choose what screen mode you want the picture to be displayed in – obviously AGA and graphic card owners have a nice advantage here.

You can then choose from five dithering methods which improve the visual quality, along with how many colours the image should be dithered to. This is helpful if you do not have a 256 colour display because it greatly improves the image quality.



An extremely versatile picture viewer that will handle many different formats

Once an image is loaded, Tiffview can act as a mini image converter, letting you save off a picture either as an IFF, Tiff or Jpeg. If you choose to use Jpeg you have a choice about the quality of the saved image. As Jpeg is a lossy picture format, a high compression ratio means lower image quality, while a low compression ratio leads to better image quality.

BMP Datatype

Author: Gunther Nikl
Workbench: 3.0

It's another BMP datatype, but you probably have one already so why would you want a new one. Well, the old BMP datatype only handled the Windoze BMP format, and would only load 16 and 256 colour pictures. When IBM released OS/2, they decided they wanted their own special version just to keep things nice and incompatible. This new version will handle both the IBM and OS/2 version of BMP.

Font Datatype

Author: Michael Letowski
Workbench: 3.0

As we are a friendly bunch down here at *Amiga Computing* we talk to each other, and seeing as we mentioned the Font datatype in the publishing page, I thought it might be nice to have it on the CoverDisk – aren't I a gent? What do you mean, no?

Anyway, this datatype will let you view any installed system fonts in MultiView. All you do is drop load the blar.font file and the next thing you know, you will have a large picture with all the available characters in that font. If you want, it is then possible to save off the picture so you can do any number of nasty things to it.

Flick

Author: Peter McGavin
Workbench: 2.04

With more Amiga owners getting access to the Internet and CD-ROMs, you are more likely to come across other picture and animation formats. One of the widely used animation formats on the PC is FLI or FLC. Animations in this format are mainly produced by Autodesk Animator (Pro) and Autodesk 3D Studio, as well as many other PC programs.

Flick is an excellent FLI player, and to use it just double-click the nasty looking icon and use the requester to pick your chosen animation. Even though Flick runs under 2.04, it supports a great deal of advanced options. It will take full advantage of Workbench 3 by using the new OS double buffering routines.

Users with either EGS or Cybervision graphics cards will be able to use flick directly on them. AGA owners are not left out as Flick will allow you to replay animations in there full 256 colour glory. If you have a CD32, Flick will even use the Akiko chip.

There are also numerous other replay options for OCS or ECS owners which allow different replay modes depending on what number of colours you would like. For those extra large animations, Flick will spool directly off a disk, and all the options can be changed in the icons tools types.

Considering all FLI animations have to be converted from chunky to planar, you get very good replay speeds on a plain A1200 – even when spooling on a CD.

TAPavi

Author: John Bickers
Workbench: 2.04

To continue with the animation theme, TAPavi allows you to view the standard Windoze video format AVI. The main advantage of AVI over FLI is that it allows animations to include sound, and it was designed to play back animations direct off disk. In some ways it is similar to the CDXL format.

TAPavi will handle a number of different types of AVI files, including both 8 and 16-bit colour modes. If you have an AGA machine then you will be able to view any of the animations in glorious 256 colours.

As for sound, TAPavi will happily allow you to play both 8 and 16-bit sound out through the Amiga's normal audio. One problem, however, is that if your machine cannot play back an animation at its full frame rate, the sound may be a little corrupt, but this happens on PC so it's only to be expected.

IFF Master

Author: Kay Drangmeister
Magic User Interface

Have you ever wondered what lurked in the deepest, darkest, dankest depth of your IFF files? Well probably not. This is a fairly handy little program that lets you poke about with the insides of IFF files.

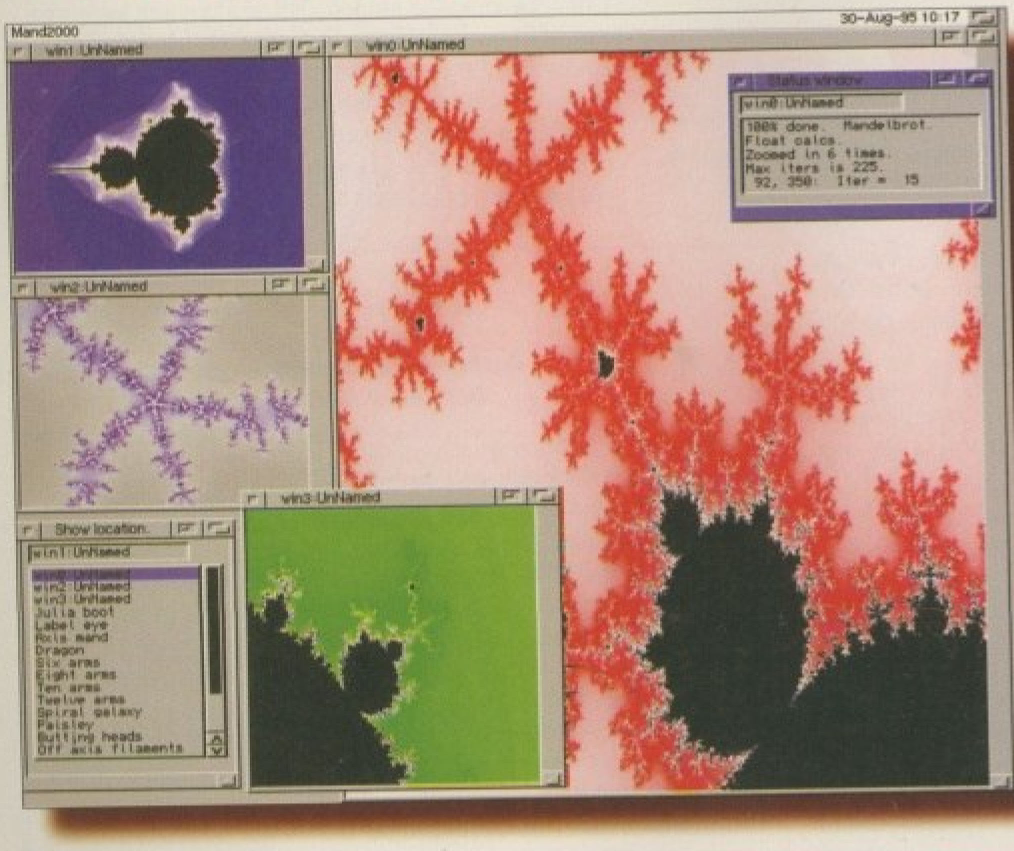


Another lovely MUI program, IFF Master lets you quickly access all your collection

IFF files are split up into chunks, each chunk containing different information about the file. For example, an ILBM file has a bitmap header and colour map chunks. IFF master knows about these, so can show you the palette used by an ILBM, and also the dimensions and other information about the picture.

Mand200[0]

Now you've had a chance to see what our coverdisk can do, why not upgrade to the full version of Mand2000



Available for only $29.95 on di[sk] or even better value CD-ROM

● The release version of Mand2000 2[.] is regularly priced at $44.95. However, *Amiga Computing* readers can upgrad[e] to the release version for the discounte[d] price of $29.95. The full release versio[n] allows unlimited saving of colour mapped, HAM and IFF24 images, and has no annoying requesters.

● *Mand2000 also has the facility to produce fractal zoom animations. You set up the start point in the fractal, say where you want to go and how many frames it should take. Click on procee[d] and then go off and have your tea. Wh[en] you get back there should be a fractal animation you can impress your mates with.*

● There is also a Mand2000 CD-ROM containing the full release version of th[e] software, plus a full CD-ROM worth of images and animations in a wide varie[ty] of resolutions, including NTSC, PAL, FrameStore and D1 video. Perfect for [the] video professional or fractal hobbyist.

● *The CD-ROM version is regularly priced at $59.95, but Amiga Computin[g] readers can upgrade to the CD-ROM, containing over 30,000 frames of spectacular animation, for just $44.95.*

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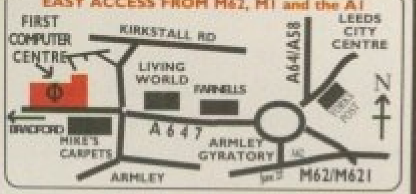
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The appliance of science

Forget setting fire to your ruler with the bunsen burner or cutting off the frogs legs and putting them down your friend's jumper. 10 out of 10 Software have a new way of teaching science

10 out of 10 Software continue their educational series with Essential Science, a collection of six games designed to educate the 5 to 12-year old. To cope with such a wide age range, the package has a user-definable level of difficulty and the child can progress in a set of clear-cut stages.

Games vary from Steamer, where you must choose correct measurements, for example, to Shuttle, a cunningly disguised educational asteroids game that requires the player to identify the correct animal. Spectrum aims to give the player scientific facts in an interesting way, such as identifying parts of the body or parts of a flower. Space Walk also requires the identification of certain objects from a given description, and Microscope lets the child uncover facts as if under a Microscope.

Marks are awarded for every game and stars given for each section which tell the child how much progress has been made. The parent or teacher can also check progress as four different colours indicate levels of success. Red indicates help needed, yellow signifies practice needed, green is given for full marks, and blue medals are for continued success.

UNAPPEALING

At first glance, though, it's hardly an appealing package. And what instantly strikes about Essential Science is the appalling graphics. It would be an insult to the Spectrum ZX to say the graphics resembled one of their earlier games because these are probably worse. When most doting parents are buying PCs for their precious Luke or Lucy to educate them through glossy multimedia packages, then there's nothing more guaranteed to make the 'educational Amiga' die a death than ugly titles like this.

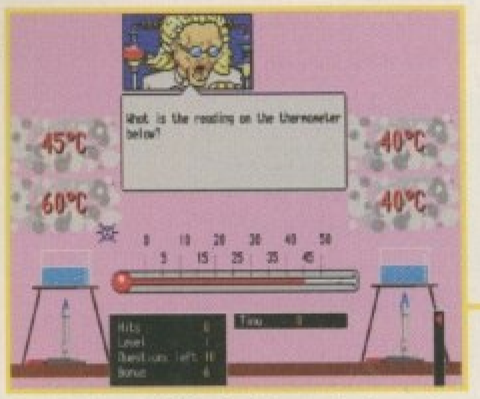
Fortunately though, it's content that matters, and Educational Science is relatively proficient in this area. The activities are varied enough and will suit children in this range. Some are very good such as the measuring exercises and they do teach some of the rudiments of science quite well.

However, at the other end of the scale, some of the activities defy belief. One of them requires you to uncover an object underneath one of the slides as if it were a microscope. The child then has to uncover the right weather picture with the right weather text, for example. However, some of them look far too similar and a younger player is going to need help initially – an adult would probably have to think about it too. For instance, at first it would seem a bent over tree would represent wind – that is until you find a kite and realise this is in fact wind. This happens on a number of occasions and it's not that the exercise is particularly difficult, but more that the pictures are hard to identify.

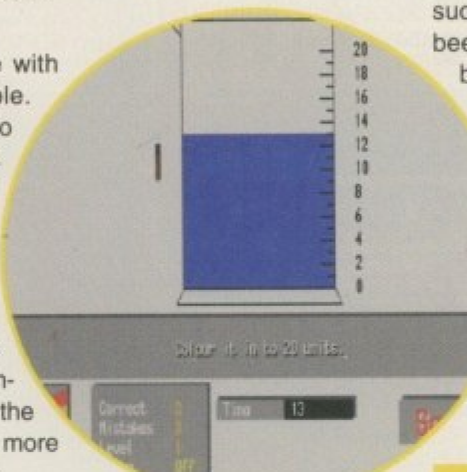
The instructions for some of the activities are also rather bewildering such as, 'Which here has never been alive at any time?' – nicely put. Or how about, 'Which of these is now dead?' where one of the answers is Turkey Slices. It's enough to make you turn vegetarian and does little to help a child's understanding.

One thing that hasn't really been thought out is how to maintain the child's interest. The target age range will have very short attention spans and simple things that could have held their interest such, as sound effects, appear to have been neglected. The computer pings or beeps in appropriate places but their is little else.

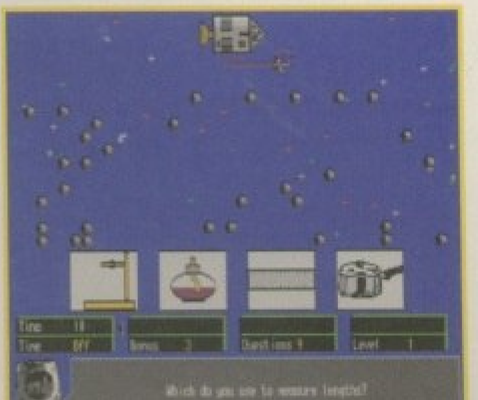
It does redeem itself, though, with the Certificate system, where the players can either print out or show on screen the progress made. This would be ideal in a school situation or where the family has two or more children because it gives the players something to strive for.



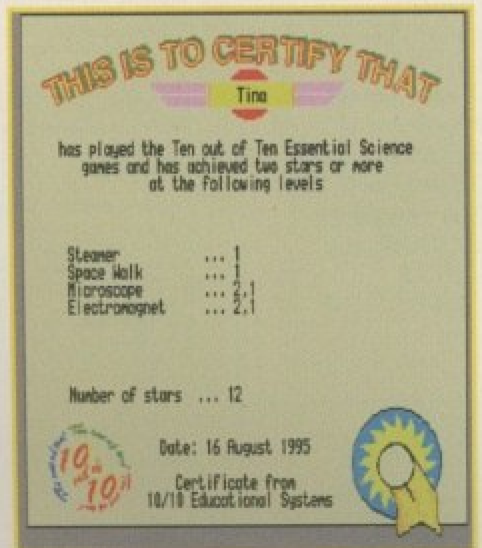
One of the activities in Steamer is to read off the thermometer measurements



Learn measuring skills by filling the beaker to the right level



This dire looking game involves directing the spaceman to the correct object



The Certificate is a good idea and should keep the players motivated

Down the wrong track

This isn't a particularly bad title, in fact some of the activities are quite reasonable, and it has been well structured for the wide age range. However, this is nowhere near up to the same standard as their other 10 out of 10 titles, and a little more attention to detail would have paid dividends.

The bottom line

Product: Essential Science
Price: £25.95
Software House: 10 out of 10
Tel: 0113 2394627

Ease of use	5
Implementation	6
Value for money	7
Overall	6

Full availability

Now you can access all the screen modes you want courtesy of the flicker fixer. Neil Mohr reviews



It may seem strange that a company would release a flicker fixer in this day of high speed graphic cards, and the DblPAL capable AGA chip set. A few years ago there was good reason for getting hold of a flicker fixer, as this was the only way to use 640 x 512 screen resolutions without going blind. So if all you need to do nowadays is buy a cheap VGA monitor to access these high resolutions, why on Earth do you need a flicker fixer?

If you own an A4000, the options available to you when it comes to choosing a monitor are fairly limiting. You either splash out on an expensive multisync monitor that will allow you to work in any resolution, or plump for a cheap VGA monitor and lose the ability to display any of the standard low sync screen modes the Amiga uses.

Whichever option you choose, the only way you can use the AGA's high resolution modes is via the scan-doubled modes, such as DblPAL. This comes with a number of drawbacks – firstly DblPAL is horribly slow, especially when you use more than four bitplanes. The reason for this is that the DMA channels are so busy just keeping the display hardware supplied with screen data that there is virtually no time left to be able to update the screen.

VIDEO DRAWBACK

The second drawback is that you cannot use these screen modes to record video. This requires using a PAL or NTSC, if you are American, screen mode.

The addition of the flicker fixer will allow you to access all the Amiga's screen modes on a normal VGA monitor. This is achieved by the flicker fixer scan doubling the PAL modes up to a rate that normal VGA monitors can handle. For video people this is pretty darn useful, as you can use an interlaced screen for your video work without having to actually view those nasty flickery interlaced screens. It will even let you play games on a monitor – if you do that sort of thing.

Installation of the flicker fixer is as easy as it gets for a Zorro card. The card has to reside in the A4000's video slot, which is typically the bottom one. So if the video slot is already in use, the flicker fixer is not going to be of much use – unless you like expensive wall decorations, or you feel like popping out and buying an A4000T.

Once the card has been slotted in place, when you reboot your machine you can gasp and coo at the new flickerless screens. If you were already using a DblPAL screen mode, you will have to first delete the ScreenMode.prefs file from the ENVARC:Sys drawer before you can continue, as the flicker fixer is not too keen on scan doubling a scan-doubled screen.

You are provided with three video outputs – for the monitor a typical VGA 15 pin RGB output, and for video connection you have a composite and SVHS sockets. There is also a single switch that allows you to choose between the card being able to display full vertical overscan or 1440 horizontal pixels in Super Hi-res mode. The switch is provided because the board cannot automatically detect what 15Khz mode the Amiga is in.

The flicker fixer also provides de-interlacing of other Amiga screen modes. Primarily Super72 and MultiScan, this will allow you to use 800x600 and 640x1024 screen modes flicker free. You should, however,.check beforehand that your monitor will be able to cope with those sync rates of up to 64kHz. The standard flicker fixer is a PAL-only version – apparently, there is a special NTSC version that will allow Americans to use the SVHS and composite outputs on NTSC devices.

If you are looking for a complete solution that will allow you to display all Amiga screen modes, then a flicker fixer is the only real answer. The AGA flicker fixer is a very nice piece of kit, but even so, £400 is an awful lot of money to ask for it. Especially considering flicker fixers used to cost £125 a few years ago.

Built-in fix

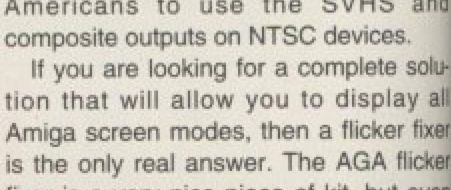
One problem with the flicker fixer is that all the jumpers used to adjust the timing of the picture are not located at the end, along with the switch and sockets. This means if you have any other cards fitted, it is extremely difficult to adjust the jumpers. You basically end up pulling all your other Zorro cards out in order to get access to them.

An associated problem is that the pot used for fine adjusting of the picture is also located on the board, which again makes things very awkward. The A3000 had a flicker fixer built in – why they did not do the same with the A4000 I do not know – but the A3000 had its pot nicely located on the outside for easy access.

These problems are not too severe because once the flicker fixer is set up, you do not have to access the jumpers or the pot again.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended



The bottom line

Product: AGA Flicker Fixer
Supplier: Power Computing
Price: £399
Phone: 01234 273000

Ease of use	8
Implementation	8
Value for money	4
Overall	7

EMERALD Creative Technology

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Zig zag zip

Ben Vost examines a possible successor to the floppy drive

Well, finally we've had a Zip drive to look at. I know we've been promising it for quite a while now, but the facts of the matter are that IOmega, the company that produces the Zip, has been so inundated with orders in the States that none of their production run has reached these shores. However, thanks to a licencing deal with Epson, the Zip should be in plentiful supply by the time you read this piece.

First impressions of the Zip are very good. It's a gorgeous looking bit of kit, its lines reminiscent of something out of Bladerunner. The drive, as you can see, is a metallic blue, in splendid contrast to the drab beiges we have been used to for computer peripherals for a long time now.

The rear end of the drive shows us two 25-way SCSI ports – in and out – for putting the Zip in the middle of a SCSI chain, a termination switch – on or off – and a SCSI ID switch. The ID switch is the only possible problem with the Zip as you can only use SCSI IDs five and six, which might be a pain for A3000 owners. But with this being the Zip's only limitation, I can see a day when SCSI unit five or six is the standard position for a Zip in the way that three is there for CD-ROM or tape back up.

The Zip's power supply plugs into the side of the drive using a right-angle plug which slots into the side of the drive, leaving that edge flush – which is jolly handy as you might want to stand the Zip on its side. The Zip has two lights at the front and an eject button that feels just like the old Spectrum keyboard. Overall, its dimensions are not much larger than a standard external floppy drive unit, and it weighs less than most external drives I have seen.

The disks the Zip uses look almost like normal floppy disks, apart from the fact that they are somewhat thicker and have a small shutter. They also don't have a write protect tab, but more of that later. There is an interesting prism-like device on the left-hand corner of the disk nearest the shutter, which may be something to stop manufacturers from copying the disk design – SyQuest owners will know the number of different manufacturers of cartridges for their drives. Sliding back the shutter reveals a single disk, again much like a floppy, only with air on either side of the disk rather than being sandwiched between cloth.

RATE OF KNOTS

Inserting a disk into the Zip drive results in the disk being brought up to speed at a rate that will surprise and delight SyQuest owners – the disk being ready for use within about four seconds. Once it is ready, the disk will read and write data at a sustainable rate of about 1Mb a second. Yes, a meg a second. Pretty impressive for a removable media device.

The Zip is only currently available in an external version, although an internal one isn't out of the realms of possibility and there are two versions of the disks that it uses. The 100Mb disk is readily available, but the 25Mb disk's future looks in doubt. After all, who is going to want a 25Mb disk for only slightly less than the 100Mb version? HiSoft will also be shipping the Zip with an adaptor to link it up to a Squirrel, and a set of tools for formatting and toggling write protection which is controlled through software, rather than using a write protect tab.

It seems that the Zip drive actually breaks one of the primary rules of computing – take any two of the following three terms:- Cheap, Fast, Good. Basically, you can have something that is fast and good but not cheap, cheap and fast but not good – you get the idea. But the Zip seems to break this rule and goes for all three at once. With a price below £200 it certainly isn't expensive – we were paying that for a bare 105Mb Quantum hard drive not so long ago – and at a meg a second, the Zip certainly compares favourably with an internal hard drive. So that's fast taken care of, and with its looks and overall usefulness, you haven't got a good product, you've got a great one.

AMIGA BLUE CHIP AWARD

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

SCSI controller

The bottom line

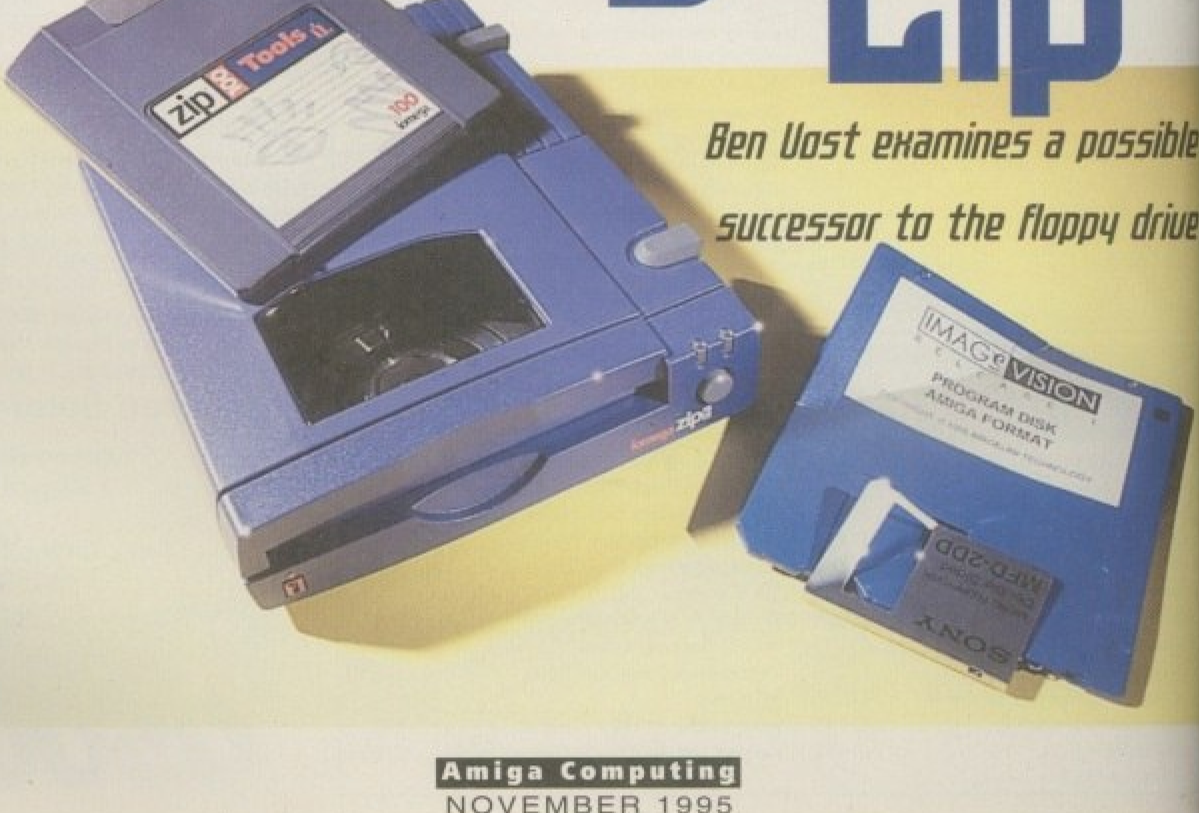
Product: IOmega Zip Drive
Price: £189.99 – 100Mb disk
£15.95 (less for quantity)
Supplier: HiSoft
Tel: 01525 718181

Ease of use	**10**
Implementation	**10**
Value for money	**9**
Overall	**10**

Cheap, fast, good... but big

If you want a Zip, but you really need more space per disk, IOmega will be bringing out a new drive based on the technology used in the Zip, called the Jaz drive. The Jaz looks similar to the Zip but is a bit taller and the disks are also about twice as thick.

The big difference is in the capacity of the disks the Jaz uses. While the Zip seems impressive storing 100Mb to a disk, the Jaz will astonish because it can hold a staggering one gigabyte on each disk. The only potential flies in the ointment are the facts that the Jaz won't be available for some time and that it will be considerably more expensive than the Zip.



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Figures shown in our chart are in MIPS and are taken from comparative performance tests using SysInfo

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- High performance DMA expansion with full 32-Bit wide DMA
- 68060 may be disabled with a simple keystroke on boot up allowing full games compatibility - even badly programmed, older software!

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What the Mags think...

1st Place Amiga Shopper Reader Awards — AMIGA SUPERSTAR — TOP RATED — Star Buy

Amiga Shopper said "in short if you want the fastest Amiga in the World, you have no option" *Amiga Computing* "...Amigas can now do anything Pentiums can" [1]/[10] *Amiga Format* "...buy one as soon as you get chance" - 95% rating

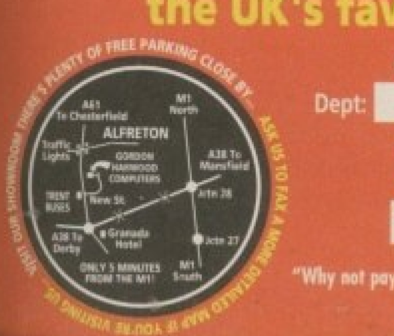
Blizzard and Cyber products have lead the way for Amiga add on boards, extending performance for the home and business user alike. They've consistently achieved the highest magazine accolades & awards! Not surprising then, that for the introduction of the World's FIRST series of '060 technology add in boards available for YOUR Amiga, Blizzard and Cyber are again the name to innovate! A new range for A1200/1500/2000/3000‡ & 4000 Amigas look set to earn even further recognition.

[1]*Available 3rd Quarter '95* [2]*Available 4th Quarter '95*

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The ultimate

Hooking up to the Internet may be seen by some as an expensive ordeal – buying a fast modem and increased phone bills can seem like a steep investment, but the resulting opportunities are well worth the initial expense.

Despite the lack of commercial support over the last year or so, the Internet sites available to Amigans are still as buoyant as ever. The popularity of the machine continues to amaze and its extensive presence on the Web is a sure-fire sign that the Amiga isn't about to drop off the face of the planet for the foreseeable future.

What follows is a rundown of some of the better and best sites around and what they've got on offer for that budding cyberpunk in you.

Companies

NewTek
http://www.newtek.com/

The manufacturing stars of the Amiga platform. LightWave? Video Toaster? Do we need to say more? Yes because, despite the company's pedigree, the actual site is something of a disappointment. There's plenty of PR info on their various high calibre packages, but they really could do with adding more. A helpline? Pricing? Reviews? Hints and tips? Links to other NewTek product-related sites? There's a great deal of scope. Come on NewTek, show your Net metal.

Content:2
Design:3
Links:1
Overall:2



While the site may be in Dutch, there's going to be an English version winging its way in the near future. In the meantime, look at the pretty pictures and realise that the Amiga actually has a company with some money behind it at long last

Escom
http://www.veronica.nl/escom/

If you know Dutch then this is just fab, but otherwise take a look at the pretty pictures. Apparently there is an English version on its way. You have been warned.

Content:NOT
Design:PARTICULARLY
Links:APPLICABLE
OVERALL:SORRY

Amiga resources

The Amiga Home Page
http://www.omnipresence.com/Amiga/

An excellent starting point for all things Amiga. Profiles, site links and news form the main bulk of what's on offer. Visit various magazines, find out about Amiga-specific downloadable software, take a trip to one of the many companies producing stuff for your favourite machine, meet other users, join groups for some indulgent chat on the Amiga, and flick through the variety of film and TV projects using the great machine as part of the production process.

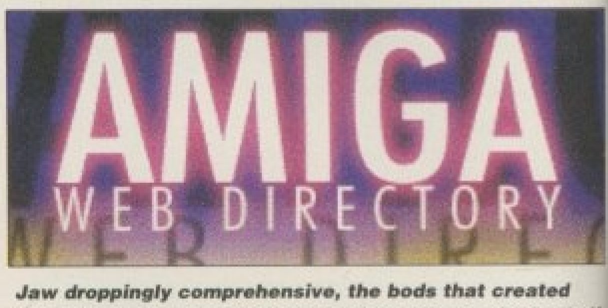
During the Commodore crisis, the guys running the site kept constant info to help, aid and inform worried owners. Well worth a visit, and thumbs up to them for making this one of the best Amiga sites to go to. One niggle though – you sometimes find that certain pages are not accessible so don't expect instant updating in some of the areas. Not devastating but a bit of a shame all the same.

Content:5
Design:4
Links:4
Overall:4

The Amiga Web Directory
http://www.prairienet.org/community/clubs/cucug/amiga.html

An awesome mass of links to absolutely anything to do with the Amiga. Watch in horror as your eyes pop out at the sheer number of links to spend lots of phone bill money on. Developers, software, shareware, Jpegs, Escom info, FAQs, etc etc etc. Oh lordy, this, coupled with the Amiga Home Page and Aminet, is invaluable.

Content:4
Design:4
Links:5
Overall:5



Jaw droppingly comprehensive, the bods that created this should give themselves a serious slap on the back. If you need to know something about the Amiga and the Internet, this should be your first port of call without hesitation. Great stuff! Oh, a double plug in one feature!

Magazines



The one and only Amiga Computing – incomparable of course and our – I mean their – home pages come with a full thumbs-up

Amiga Computing
http://www.demon.co.uk/amigacomp/

Here it is – the best commercial Amiga mag site on the Web. If you want the latest rundown on the current issue and a few reviews and features thrown in to boot, then you've just scraped the top of the iceberg! Also hunt round our top ten fave site list and grab hold of some excellent subscription offers. Bless.

Content:4
Design:4
Links:3
Overall:4

Amiga Report On-line Magazine
http://www.omnipresence.com/Amiga/News/AR/index.html

A labour of love for the editor-in-chief, Jason Compton, Amiga Report is another example of the dedication shown by users. News, reviews, previews, opinion and more are offered in healthful doses, plus this guy has also been known to get exclusives. All the back issues are available to browse through and, in true public spirit, the whole thing is absolutely free. Recommended.

Content:4
Design:3
Links:2
Overall:3

Newsgroups

news:comp.sys.amiga.advocacy
news:comp.sys.amiga.applications
news:comp.sys.amiga.announce
news:comp.sys.amiga.datacomm
news:comp.sys.amiga.emulations
news:comp.sys.amiga.graphics
news:comp.sys.amiga.misc
news:comp.sys.amiga.networking
news:comp.sys.amiga.programmer

Newsgroups are an excellent forum for debate and help on a particular subject. With the Amiga's current crop, this is particularly obvious and shows the kind of support the machine still receives, even after spending too much of its time sitting on a backburner. Check out all the above if there's a relevant subject you want to talk about, receive help with, or slag off.

Aminet
http://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/public/aminet/info/www/home-src.doc.html

For those who have indulged themselves in the rather superb Aminet CDs currently available, you'll know what kind of immense potential the site has. The largest collection of Amiga software on the Internet, if you need a very specific program, demo, fish disk, game, 3D model, picture, sound, music module or whatever, the chances are you'll find it buried somewhere in here and easily available with the comprehensive directory system.

Content:5
Design:4
Links:4
Overall:5

Commodore Users Groups
http://www.prairienet.org/community/clubs/cucug/usergroups.html

Brought to you by the Champaign-Urbana Commodore Users Group, check who else all over the world is talking and supporting the Amiga as hardcore enthusiasts. From England and Ireland to the States and Australia, there are hotlinks to several and addresses to write off to for others.

Amos City
http://www.cee.hw.ac.uk/~ceebdb/amos/

The ever popular software authoring package has plenty of sites dedicated to it. Amos City is one of the more comprehensive examples, with downloadable files for use with the package, mailing lists for other users (highly useful for obtaining info, help and tips), extensions to the program, and more.

Could do with expanding – judging from our mail bag, there's still plenty of demand out there – but certainly worth a visit nevertheless.

Content:3
Design:3
Links:4
Overall:3

Amiga Mosaic Home
http://www.omnipresence.com/amosaic/2.0/

Sworn by most as the WWW browser for the Amiga, this site contains all the latest info on upgrades, questions, documentation, screenshots, downloadable versions and more. Useful and some would say vital, this is one of the first port of calls for Net virgins.

Content:3
Design:2
Links:3
Overall:3

collection

Packed with software, info and debate, the Amiga is admirably catered for by the Internet. Adam Phillips tells you why

CD32 Newsgroup
news:comp.sys.amiga.cd32

While Escom are spouting out conflicting messages concerning the games console's future, there's still plenty of info to be gleaned from the Internet on the grey lunchbox's talent. This particular newsgroup has messages, debate, and FAQs from all over the world discussing the various strengths, weaknesses and problems with the machine.

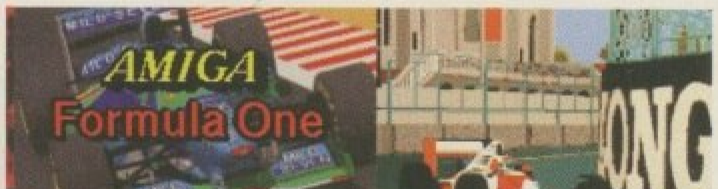
Content:3
Design:3
Links:1
Overall:3

An oddity

Amiga Formula One
http://cswww2.essex.ac.uk/users/robeoy/af1.html

Content:3
Design:3
Links:3
Overall:3

I doubt that Microprose ever realised that when their premier racing game, Formula One Grand Prix, was released it would attract this kind of devotion. Packed with info on the fan club, programs to aid better play and more, this is the ultimate site for budding Michael Schumachers (or Damon Hill if you're desperate to be patriotic). Recommended for fanatics only.



Wonders never cease – this home page is for fanatics of Microprose's classic only. Extensive stuff. I wonder if the author gets out much?

Art

Eric Schwartz
http://info.ox.ac.uk/~kebl0206/eric.html

Seemingly the Amiga's animation mascot, Eric Schwartz has gained himself quite a formidable reputation. This site is as extensive as they come, with what appears to be a complete listing of all the man's anim work to date. All downloadable with info on when they were created, brief plot descriptions, size of files, and access to what you'll need to play them – anyone with a penchant for Schwartz should walk away from this site with a warm glow in their belly. Plus a look at his artwork, a few words from the man himself, and a history of Amy the squirrel.

Content:4
Design:3
Links:2
Overall:3



That man Eric has been churning out stuff for years now and this Web site has produced a glowing tribute to the artist's

Amiga Art Gallery
http://www.omnipresence.com/Amiga/Gallery/Gallery.html

Working in conjunction with Aminet, here's a large portfolio of constantly updated images to browse through. Featuring the usual rendering delights of LightWave, Imagine, Aladdin 4D, and Real 3D, there's something here for everyone. Plus there's some Mpeg to download as well.

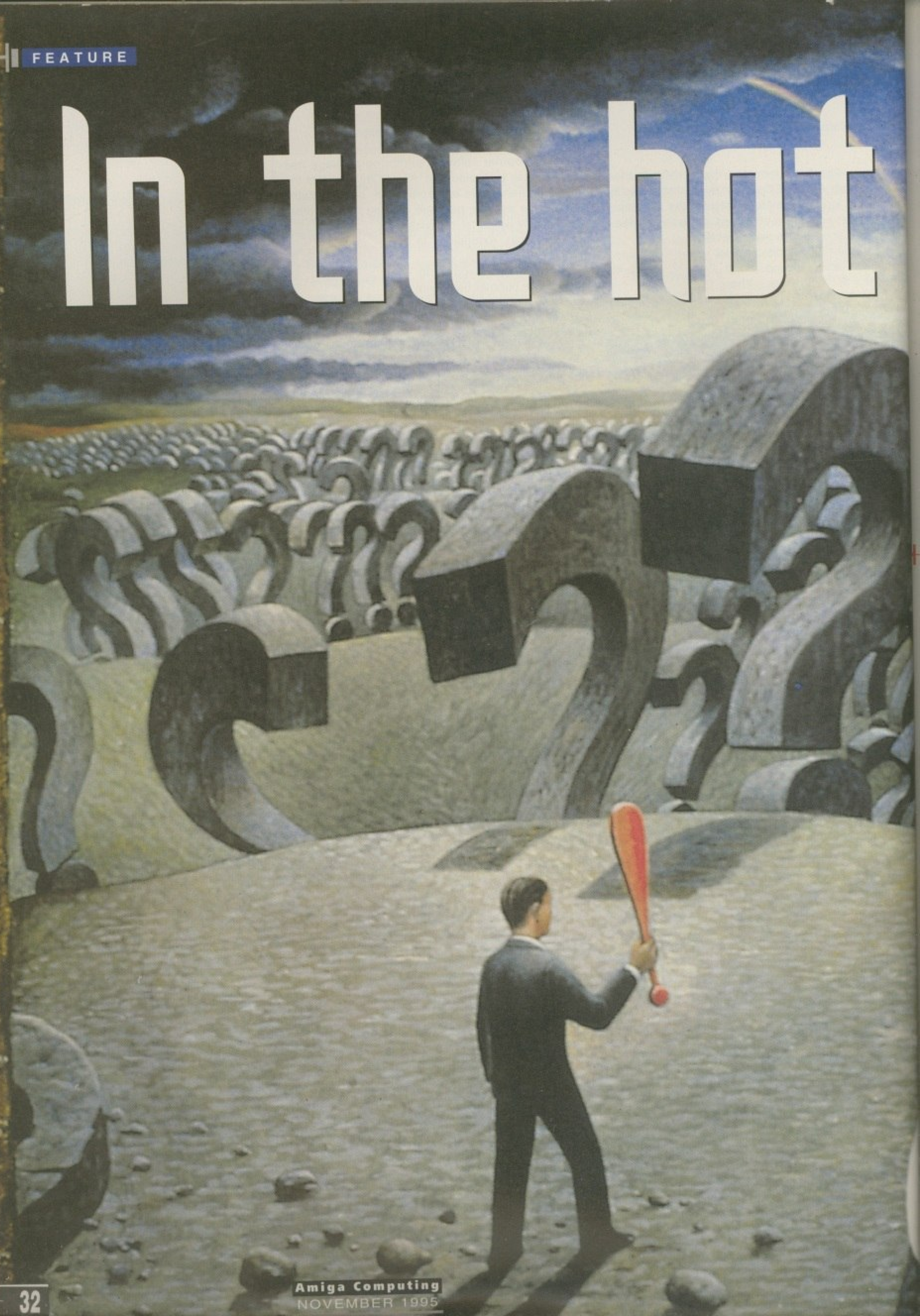
Content:4
Design:3
Links:2
Overall:3

Rainbow of Chaos
http://www.indy.net/~gemini//

Focusing more on 2D art by Amigans, this site has a couple of resident artists and links to other artistic fanatics. There's no doubt that there needs to be more work to browse through, but the gallery 'owner' has an open invite to anyone wanting to submit any of their masterpieces for inclusion.

Content:2
Design:3
Links:2
Overall:2

In the hot



seat

It was the height of summer, and the Amiga Technologies press conference announced the rebirth of the Amiga in the UK. Gareth Lofthouse reports on the tough questioning the company had to face

It was the moment we've been waiting 18 months for since the demise of the old Commodore Empire: the Amiga is back, said the men from Escom, and on target to hit the streets of Britain in time for September.

The official UK relaunch of the Amiga took place at a press conference at the Sheraton Hotel in Heathrow on a sweltering summer day in mid-August. Optimists might have taken the sunshine as a good omen, but difficult questions had been fermenting during the months since the takeover, however, and *Amiga Computing* was there to find out what substance lay behind the talk.

The panel assembled to state Amiga Technologies' case included most of the key players from Europe and Britain, which at least showed some encouraging commitment to the key UK market. Petro Tyschtschenko, the company's general manager, was accompanied by Jonathon Anderson and John Smith of Amiga Technology UK, plus PR man Gilles Bourdin, and Barry Thurston of SCALA who was there to orchestrate the multimedia presentation.

It soon became apparent, however, that the amount of new and concrete information available was rather limited. The announced specifications for the roll-out Amigas, for example, held no surprises, with even the faster 060 version of the 4000T not available until November at the earliest.

Amiga Technologies were not in a position to disclose much more about the contents of the software to be bundled with new Amigas either. John Smith, UK Sales Manager, revealed that 1200s would include a database, word processor, spreadsheet, paint package and two games, but specific product names were unavailable.

BUNDLED UP

The confusion over how Scala was going to be combined with 1200s was finally cleared up, with the announcement of two different A1200 bundles. The £399 bundle announced last month will lack a hard drive, and it was decided that it would be impractical to include SCALA with this option. Consequently, a £499 package was announced containing an Amiga with a built-in 170Mb hard drive

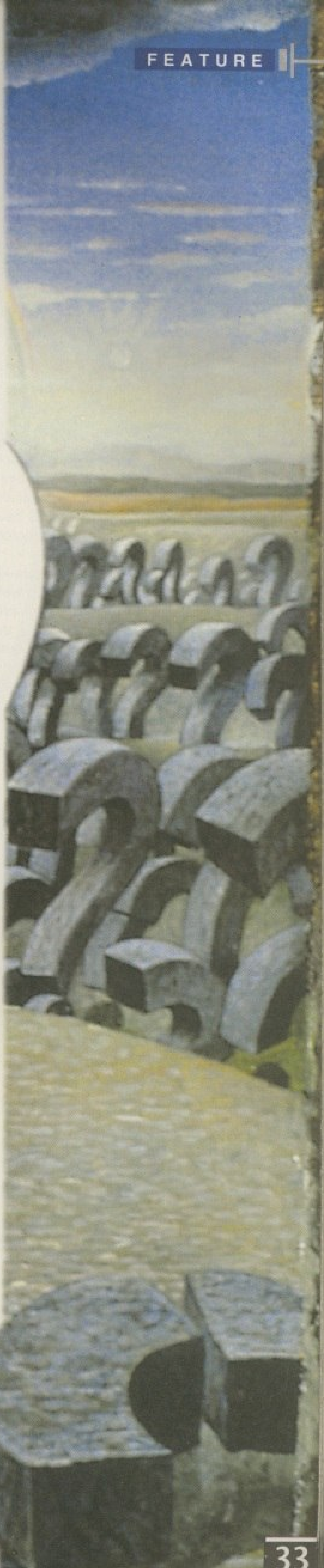
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Marketing a legend

Asked if there were any plans to advertise the Amiga products, Tyschtschenko replied that this would not be possible until next year. This means that at the time when Microsoft and the Japanese console manufacturers are taking over prime time TV slots, the Amiga will have little presence outside its own specialist press.

Anderson argued, however, that allowances had been made towards distributors to help them with cost, and he expects them to shout about the Amiga in their own adverts. Gilles Bourdin also pointed out that Amiga Technologies' presence at the IFA fair in Berlin showed a worthwhile marketing investment.

What is encouraging is that almost 50 per cent of the 60,000 Amigas allocated for the UK this year have already been sold. Amiga Technologies are confident they'll sell their entire stock of Amigas produced this year.



and Scala MM300, on top of the standard software bundle.

What *was* surprising, however, were a number of statements that contradicted details everyone thought were settled some weeks ago. It appears, contrary to what Tyschtschenko told *Amiga Computing* last month, that the Amiga will be distributed through Escom shops after all – a revelation that came as a relief to those concerned about the Amiga's high street presence this Christmas.

U-TURN

Previously, Tyschtschenko had believed that the Escom staff would be too geared towards PC and insufficiently educated about the Amigas to sell them successfully. The about face, however, seems to be based on the fact that the employees in the UK shops will all have had experience of selling Amigas before the Rumbelows buyout.

CD32 owners on the verge of hara-kiri were given pause for thought as well. While the failure to outline any plans previously had led many to assume the console was to be consigned to the dustbin of computer could-have-beens, Tyschtschenko gave it a more optimistic prognosis.

"We have had tremendous problems obtaining DRAMs, so we decided not to produce the CD32 this year," he offered. "But you can be sure we will produce it next year. This year we have too many problems with our two main products."

This year though, the only other new products due from Amiga Technologies are the virtual I-glasses (see our new report) and a multiscan monitor that is almost certainly going to be the 14" Microvitec 1438 – though 15" and 17" models are planned for next year.

Neither the speech made by Petro Tyschtschenko, or John Smith, however, confronted many of the doubts that had been lurking at the back of most enthusiasts' minds, and it was only in the question and answer session that the knottier issues were addressed. Pricing was perhaps the most commonly voiced worry.

CLEAR AIMS

The £1900 ex VAT cost for 4000Ts was the first target, and with faster, fully kitted PCs available at around £1000, Amiga Technologies had to explain where they thought their high-end machine's market lay. "I think one of the problems in the past is that the Amiga has been badged as if it will do everything for everyone," argued Anderson. "We are clearly aiming the 4000T towards the multimedia market. Even though technology has moved on a bit, the Amiga is still the best machine out there because of its multitasking capabilities, among other things, for multimedia."

The multimedia strategy itself was later brought into question, however. Escom themselves are selling cheap, ready-to-run PCs with in-built sound cards and speakers. The terms PC and multimedia are almost synonomous in the eyes of the general public, and even the Amiga's flagship software, Scala, is now available for the rival platform.

Despite being pleased by their PC product, Scala UK's Barry Thurston fought back against the idea that the Amiga was overpriced and behind the times. "You still have to put an awful lot of expansion into a PC to get it up to the effortless performance level the Amiga has for multimedia," he argued. "So your basic cost might be OK, but your actual overall cost will be much higher. That's particularly true," he continued, "when you're talking about distributing information to television. The cost of putting a PAL encoder in a PC is damn expensive."

The argument for the A1200's strengths seemed more compelling, however. Amiga Technologies admitted the

Hot suits, frayed tempers

The words 'press conference' might conjure up the vision of large halls packed with hordes of scribbling hacks, places where quickfire questioning is accompanied by a barrage of flickering flashlights from the assembled press photographers. You will not be surprised to hear that this affair was somewhat more – shall we say – subdued.



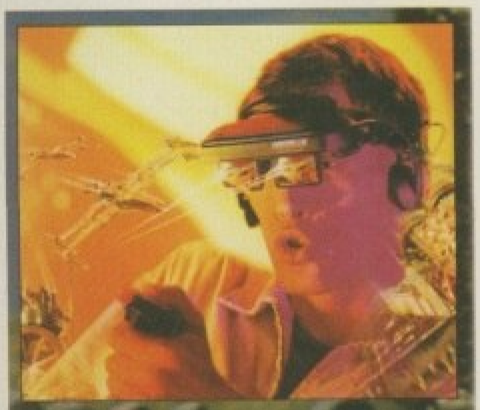
Escom's MD Manfred, negotiating in America to ensure the Amiga's success

Ironically, Amiga press members themselves were rather thin on the ground, with staff from the games magazines conspicuous by their absence. It would appear that they, at least, are rather sceptical about the prospects of the Amiga regaining its place at the heart of the computer entertainment industry.

The remaining 'serious' editorial from *Amiga Computing*, Format, Shopper, CU Amiga and JAM magazines assembled at the Sheraton hotel, Heathrow, conversed with strained civility, moaned about the steep pricing for beer, and gave voice to the sort of cynicism I suppose is expected from journalists on these occasions.

Having been ushered into a small but well filled room, the tone for the event was set early on. In his opening words, Petro Tyschtschenko excused the absence of Manfred Schmitt, explaining that the Escom MD was striking a deal in America somewhere – perhaps he was negotiating a take-over of Microsoft, he joked. It was the first sign that the conference was more about confidence than solid news.

Much as everyone wanted to proclaim the return of the UK's favourite home computer, however, old tensions within the Amiga community began to resurface once the speeches were over. Perhaps it had not helped that the first half of the conference was as much about Escom's PC line and PC games on the I-glasses as it was about Amigas.

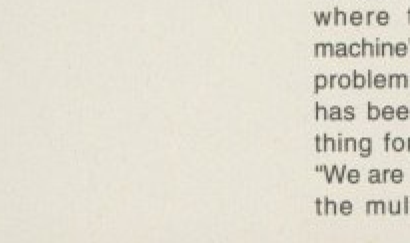


Virtual Amigas

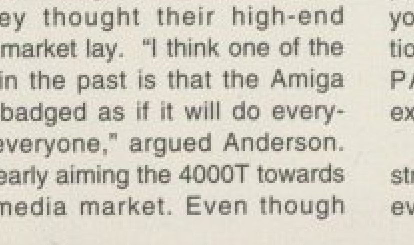
Despite it being the official relaunch of the Amiga, they was no sign of them at the conference. Escom did take the opportunity to unveil the Virtual I-O glasses, the virtual reality headset for which they have exclusive distribution rights.

Two versions will be made available. The basic video model will plug into any machine with a composite video port – for example Amiga and VCRs – enabling it to 2D and 3D films. The price is set for £599, though they hope to drop prices as the technology becomes more mainstream.

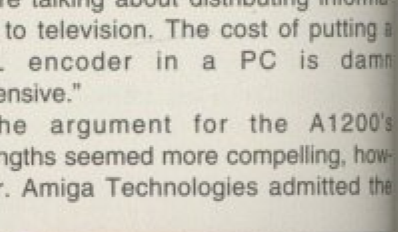
The PC version includes a headtracker so it can be used with 3D games like Doom or Heretic. However, due to the fact it will require a PAL converter, it costs £899.



The A1200: Amiga Technologies are confident about Christmas sales



The new multiscan monitor, looking suspiciously like the Microvitec 1438



A4000T: The new green case would have taken too long to produce

Amiga Technologies is run largely by ex-Commodore people, and at one point the panel faced the same sort of criticism over marketing strategy that was levelled at the old company. After all, it was argued, there seemed to be little marketing to raise the Amiga's profile, and not a lot in the way of new products either. "Convince us otherwise !" one person demanded in an increasingly heated atmosphere.

> The Amiga will be distributed through Escom shops after all - a revelation that came as a relief to those concerned about the Amiga's high street presence this Christmas

In response, Anderson contested that the massive advertising campaigns from Microsoft and the Japanese giants would just lead to confusion for the public, and added a criticism of his own against magazine publishers. "I think that one of the misdemeanours that most mags have done to the detriment of our industry is to confuse the end users **big time**," he retaliated. "They don't know whether to wait for this or that, and the net result is that they're still waiting. "Anderson's subsequent plea for Amiga Technologies and the specialist press to work together for a successful relaunch did little to calm things down. The Future Publishing camp accused Anderson of snubbing Amiga magazines by giving information to CTW first. There then ensued an argument about who phoned who first, how many messages were left on whose answering machines, and so on, until discussion of the Amiga seemed in danger of being lost in personal disputes.

Fortunately, the proceedings soon returned to more of an even keel, but a certain amount of frustration remained at Amiga Technologies' failure to dispel some widely held doubts. Perhaps, though, the press were expecting too much from the company in the time they'd had to ramp production up. "We know there is a lot more to be done," Gilles Bourdin acknowledged after the conference had been wound up.



Tyschtschenko, general manager: ' We will start spending on advertising next year.'

machine faced some stiff competition both from £299 super consoles and low priced PCs, but there was a strong belief that the A1200 could win the middle ground as an entry-level computer.

As far as the PC was concerned, John Smith argued, not everyone could afford £1000 even if they wanted one. Tyschtschenko also pointed out that PCs were about to rise radically in price due to the fact that Windows 95 required a minimum of 8Mb of notoriously expensive RAM.

A lot of people originally bought their Amigas to play games, but with Sony's Playstation about to hit the shops, didn't they fear for the A1200's fortunes in the Christmas season? John Smith was unperturbed over this issue.

"I think the kind of productivity software in the pack we were delivering at the end of Commodore's time showed the direction in which we were already moving," he said. "Basically, I think lots of A500/600 users want to move over to the 1200 – they now have computer experience and they want productivity stuff. They know the Amiga is far more than just a games machine, so we will certainly push things towards the productivity side."

Anderson added that it would attract people who were sick of the console's limitations as well. "Most parents want their kids to have more than one option. With a console you either play games or do nothing. I don't think we're directly squaring up to the Japanese here."

Make or break

The Amiga's relaunch is imminent, but its long-term survival is less certain. Amiga Technologies are confident of being able to sell the Amigas allocated for the UK market this Christmas; if they are to prevent it from slipping back into oblivion, however, upgraded machines with bundled CD drives must be accompanied by serious investment in advertising, and the sooner the better.

If it was a pity that the conference led to some angry exchanges between the press and the panel, it was at least a testament to how passionately everyone assembled wanted the Amiga to be reborn. And in raising the spectre of future challenges, it's easy to forget what Amiga Technologies have achieved in getting the computer back into the shops in time for Christmas. Tyschtschenko put it succinctly:

"To ramp production up in three months is very difficult. I can tell you I've never worked so hard in all my life to be successful for the Amiga as I have in the last three months."

Friends in high places

The day after announcing the relaunch to the press, Amiga Technologies presented its UK strategy at a developer's conference. *Amiga Computing* contacted Hi-soft, makers of the Squirrel interface, to find out their reaction to the key issues.

MD David Link's views on the pricing were generally positive. "Taken as a whole package, the bundle offers tremendous value for money," he said. Yes we would all like to see a standalone A1200 at a lower price. But I can understand Amiga Technologies' need to put forward A1200s at a price that allows them to go on supporting the Amiga. They've done that by putting forward a very attractive software bundle."

Link did add, however, that he thought the A4000 was overpriced and hoped it would come down in cost once Amiga Technologies had recovered some of its expenditure.

UNCONCERNED

As far as the lack of pre-Christmas advertising was concerned, Link was unconcerned. "Knowing our customers as we do," he commented, "there's a large pent up demand for A1200s and A4000s in the market that will be reached through the individual retailers. People like us evangelise the machine, and that's as good as any advertising given the number of machines available before Christmas."

Link was also impressed by Amiga Technologies' marketing push, although he accepted that Amiga users wanted CD interactive titles as well as authoring systems. "Of course we want products like Encarta and Cinemania," he said. "But that's up to individual publishers to bite the bullet. I think the number of CD drives sold with the Squirrel shows the serious potential for any publisher to move in on that market."

Like Hi-Soft itself, we asked? Link responded positively: "If anybody wanted to approach us with half an idea, or an authoring system, or a title they wanted publishing, we would almost positively seriously consider it."

Not everyonewas so positive, however. Chris Wiles, MD of Active Software, felt the price even for A1200 was set too high.

Come fly with me

Transform your IDE interface into a SCSI port. Surely it cannot be true, Neil Mohr finds out

There has always been a certain snobbery about SCSI. If one person has a SCSI hard drive and the other an IDE then the SCSI owner could always feel superior, and can happily scoff at their friends inadequacies.

Generally, SCSI hard drives are considered to be superior in performance than IDE, even though you do have to pay for the privilege. Apart from the performance advantage, a SCSI interface allows you to connect up to seven peripherals onto the SCSI chain. This is the greatest advantage over IDE as they only allow you to connect two IDE hard drives, and you usually have to faff about with jumpers, making one a master drive and the other a slave drive, which normally involves ringing up the manufactures and getting the correct details.

Currently, if you want to add a SCSI interface to your A1200 your options are quite limited. You can either buy one of the trapdoor accelerators that also have a SCSI option, or get a Squirrel. The first is fairly expensive and the last ties up your PCMCIA slot.

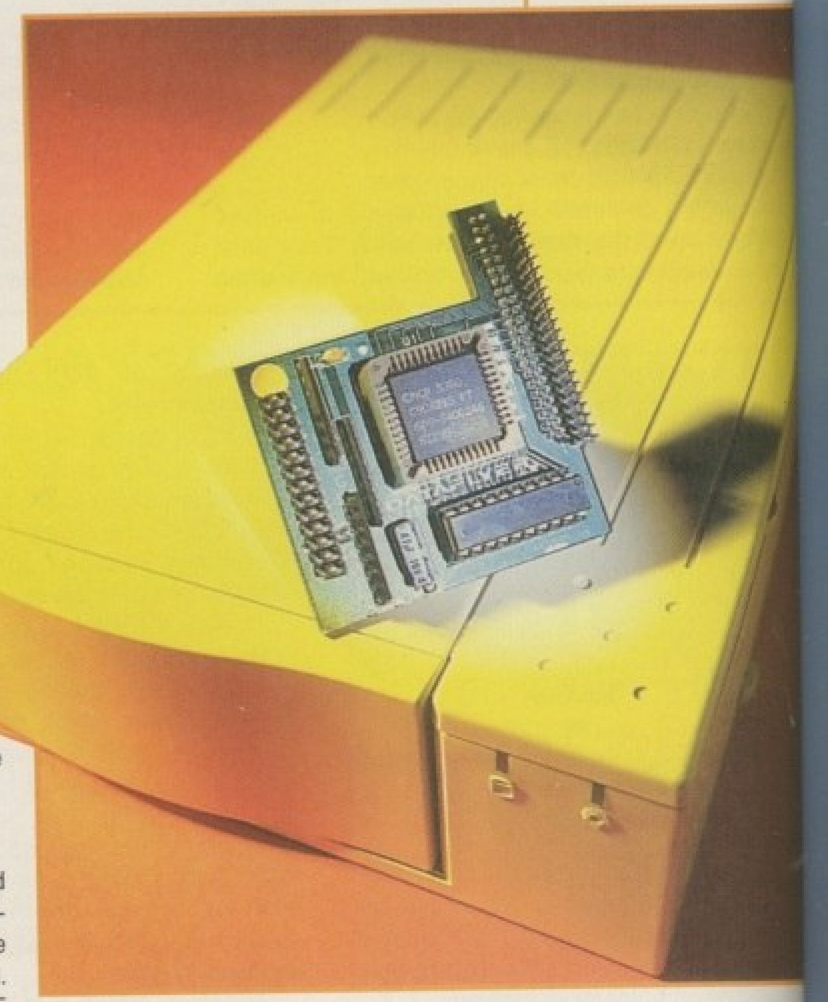
A few years ago that would have meant little, as there were no PCMCIA peripherals around, but more and more are starting to appear, and for certain people, leaving the slot free might be a necessity.

Installation of the DataFlyer is necessarily more complex than the Squirrel, because it plugs into the IDE slot of your computer. Firstly, you have to place a small plastic square under where the DataFlyer will go. This is required to stop the DataFlyer's circuit board from shorting out on the Amiga's metal shield. You then plug the board into the IDE port.

If you have a hard drive already, you will need to move it back about a centimetre to allow the leads to fit. This is done by unscrewing the drive from its tray and then, using a rubber bung, the drive is wedged back into the tray in its new position. This might not sound very secure but the drive really is fixed in position very firmly.

All that remains is to feed a ribbon cable from the DataFlyer round to that hole at the back of your A1200 – the one you never knew a use for. By then screwing a supplied metal plate into place, and then screwing the connector into this, you end up with a brand spanking new SCSI port at the back of your Amiga. This just leaves the software to install, which is extremely simple. You boot up your computer with whichever partition or disk you want the driver installed on, and the install software will copy the correct device driver and add a couple of lines to the startup-sequence. The next time you boot up, any SCSI hard drives attached will be automatically recognised. If you want to use a CD drive, you will also need to get hold of the AmiCDhandler software. This will install the correct CD handler and DosDriver for use with the DataFlyer and is very simple to install, using the standard Amiga Installer.

Fitting the DataFlyer was a very simple process, with good clear instructions in the manual. Taking you through each step of the way, in total it took about 15 minutes to fit. Most of that time was taken up with opening up and closing the Amiga.



RECOGNITION

Once the software is installed, any hard drives you attach are automatically recognised and mounted – the transfer rate being only a little slower than the squirrel. The main problem here is that the IDE interface is dependant on the CPU, so the faster your computer, the faster the DataFlyer will be.

One of the drawbacks from using the IDE port is that the first two SCSI devices are set aside for IDE hard drives, with these being treated as SCSI hard drives. This has the effect that you will only be able to attach five other external devices. For most people this should not pose any problems.

Pros and cons

The main competition for the DataFlyer is the Squirrel, so any A1200 owner wanting a SCSI interface will want to consider the pros and cons of both. As a SCSI interface the DataFlyer works well. It is reasonably priced, has the advantage of leaving the PCMCIA slot free, and you end up with a neat new SCSI interface at the back of your A1200.

The main draw back with the DataFlyer is that some people may be put off with the installation and also, if you are wanting to connect a CD you can get the Squirrel as a complete package. If you are wanting to use the DataFlyer with a CD, Siren can supply all the necessary leads and the AmiCDhandler software.

If you are not put off by the thought of having to remove the top of your A1200, then the DataFlyer is a neater solution to getting a SCSI interface.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended



The bottom line

Product: DataFlyer
Supplier: Siren Software
Price: £69.99
Phone: 0500 340548

Ease of use	7
Implementation	8
Value for money	7
Overall	7

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Draco – a

After much hype and hollow promises, it appears there's about as much chance of a new or improved Amiga appearing before Christmas as yours truly sprouting an extra orifice. At best, we can expect a fresh production run of the existing range with perhaps the added glamour of the new Amiga Technologies logo. Not what you'd call inspiring news for serious Amiga users.

Fortunately, there is a ray of hope thanks to the Amiga's most prolific third-party supporter. Even through the Amiga's darkest hour, MacroSystem have continued to develop their impressive range of add-ons, which have now evolved into a completely new machine with Amiga technology at its heart.

Courtesy of their existing hardware, MacroSystem already have all the principle elements of a ground-breaking computer. Thanks to Retina, which in the Draco's case ships with 4Mb of RAM and CyberVision drivers as standard, they can deliver super fastest 24-bit graphics. Add to that stereo 16-bit audio via Toccata and the digital video skills of VLab Motion and you arrive at a computing potential the PC and Mac can only dream off.

What's missing is, of course, an operating system, and in that particular area the Amiga is still revered. With Windows 95 barely knocking on the door of Workbench 1.3 and the incredibly expense and self indulgent OS of the Mac, a licensed Amiga OS is the obvious choice for serious audio/video and CG productions.

GREAT CHOICE

With its combination of 10-years multitasking experience, a natural affinity with video, an OS which only requires one eighth of the resources required by a PC to perform the same task, the Amiga OS is the obvious choice for the new Microsystems' machine.

Although sound and vision are taken care of, there's the small matter of the CPU, not to mention the other I/O essentials that go to make up a modern computer. In the case of the Draco, this is taken care of via a 'Draco direct' plug-in CPU card and I/O combo consisting of an 060 with a SCSI II controller, space for up to 64Mb of RAM via standard simms, connections for mouse, serial, parallel ports and of course an HD floppy.

Add to that an array of QuickLogic chips for Kickstart and a few other essentials and you arrive at the world's first Amiga on a card – with one major difference. At first glance, the Draco's graphical user interface – or GUI – looks every inch an Amiga, but there is one major difference. The Draco does not have the AGA, or in fact any part of the Amiga's custom chipset. To prove the point, a quick glance at the menu bar reveals not 2Mb, but 4Mb of chip memory – alias Retina on-board Add to that the lack of the AGA chipset and you arrive at the Draco alternative. Admittedly, this may sound like a terminal problem, but for those using the Amiga as a production tool – especially video – the AGA Chipset is often more of a hindrance than anything else.

However, no AGA obviously does preclude certain applications from the Draco repertoire, notables including Dpaint, Brilliance and most important of all Scala. In short, software that insists on the AGA chipset by default, or in the case of Scala has a heavy dependence on Amiga specific chip RAM. To counter the loss of Dpaint, MacroSystem are already putting the finishing touches to a 2D animation system for Xipaint – a package which already ships as part of the Retina/Draco software suite. To further enhance the painting power, MacroSystem have already successfully tested TVPaint on the Draco. As a result, a dedicated Draco version and dongle should be shipping in the Autumn.

Obviously, Scala presents a bigger problem, and at present there are no plans for a dedicated Draco version. However, if the machine achieves the success it deserves, I'm sure it wouldn't be too long before Scala step in to fill the gap in the



Dragon fire

Another unique, and truly superb feature of VLM is its seamless combination of audio and video, since version 2.0 of the MovieShop software VLM has had the ability to act as a true digital AV – audio/video editing system.

Unlike any other Amiga system, audio and video are actually hard-wired together. As a result, when you cut, copy and paste video, the same edits apply to the accompanying stereo or mono audio. When the need arises you're still free to import, edit, and export the accompanying audio tracks or mix them within MovieShop to generate a perfect backing track.

Although both VLM and the Toccata sound cards

new breed



Paul Austin previews the incredible MacroSystem power tower

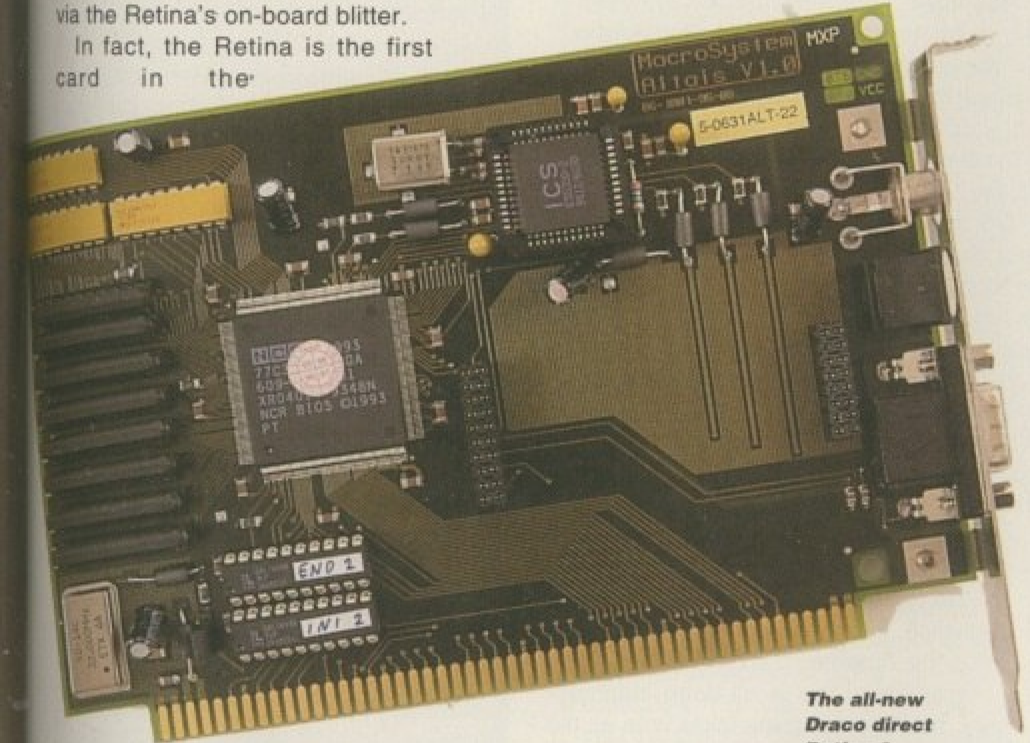
market. After all, if they can port to the PC in the form of MM100, I doubt they'd have too much trouble doing the same for the Draco – the process being made all the easier via the standardisation offered via MMOS.

DRACO DIRECT

The lack of the standard Amiga chipset could hold a few potential problems for programmers and indeed some notable Amiga Applications. One of the most worrying aspects is access to the Amiga blitter. Fortunately, MacroSystem have already spotted the problem and after some clever coding, a direct replacement has been made via the Retina's on-board blitter.

In fact, the Retina is the first card in the collection to go 'Draco direct' and can now pump through an incredible 35Mb per second, making it the fastest graphics card in the business – running Workbench or any graphic card-compliant software in full 24bit, 64K or 256 colours in a variety of resolutions ranging from 320 x 240 up to 1600 x 992.

The Retina's affinity with Workbench emulation, plus the ever-growing range of software with direct support for RTG boards, is a key factor in the development of the Draco. LightWave, ADPro, ImageFX, Wordworth, PageStream, the list goes on. As a consequence, even with the Custom Chipset stripped away, the Draco remains compatible with the vast majority of Amiga applications – only the ones which absolutely insist on standard chip RAM or the AGA fall by the wayside.



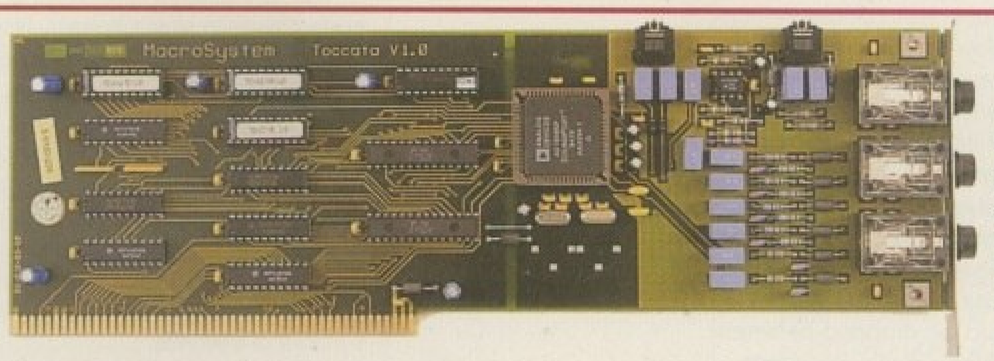
The all-new Draco direct Retina 3

COMPATIBILITY

Another huge plus for the Draco is its backwards compatibility. This may seem a strange comment in relation to a brand new computer, but when it comes to MacroSystems' hardware it's entirely accurate. Obviously, there's a lot of people out there who've already invested a fair amount of hard earned cash on Toccatas, VLab Motion cards and Retina's. The good news is that all of the above will work perfectly well in the Draco. As a consequence, MacroSystem will be offering a mix and match option for those who already have elements of the Draco as part of the existing systems.

However, it must be said there are ➤

combine forces within the MovieShop/Draco environment, samples captured directly via the Toccata such as backing music or narration can still be imported and mixed with the existing AV in the production. Better still, any imported or directly captured audio can still be worked upon within MovieShop. For example, you can import as much audio as you like, adjust its length and position on the Timeline, or transfer it between video clips or scenes.

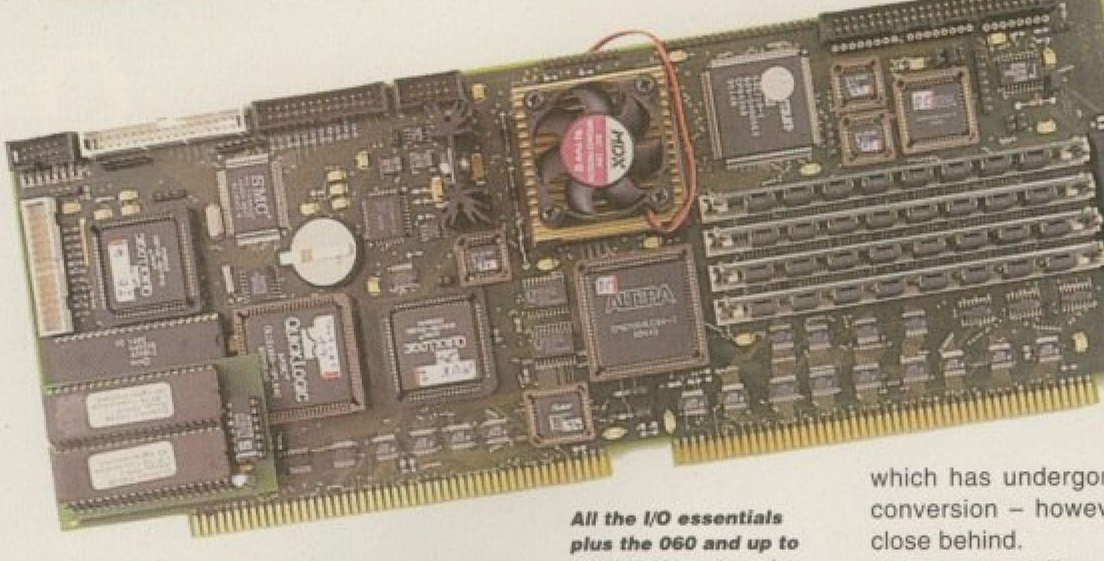


The Toccata card delivering DAT quality stereo sound with multiple input mixing MoviShop and its own control software

But perhaps most importantly, you also have complete control over the sound envelopes of the samples you're working on. As part of the Timeline control, you're provided with an envelope requester which allows you to insert multiple edit points and adjust where the levels appropriately. Consequently, you can introduce frame accurate volume changes and even cross-fades between different audio tracks in different video clips. In short, complete control over the sound dynamics within the production.

Once you've achieved a suitable mix between the original audio, backing music, vocal over-dubs, sound effects or whatever else, the whole thing can be boiled down into a new super sample which can be linked to a particular section of video or kept as a separate element.

The finishing touch on the audio side is the arrival of a built-in SMPTE timecode generator. Now, striping a tape with timecode is simply a matter of plugging-in the target recorder and clicking on a button. Yet another broadcast essential catered for.



All the I/O essentials plus the 060 and up to 64Mb RAM on board

advantages for those willing to invest in 'Draco direct' hardware. At present, the Retina is the only card in the collection which has undergone the conversion – however VLab Motion is close behind.

A standard Zorro II VLM transfers roughly 1Mb a second faster on the Draco, courtesy of a fast Zorro II software patch. In addition, the MovieShop code has also been optimised, especially in relation to decoding and encoding for the ever growing band of DVEs.

Running the standard VLM card, the Draco can attain, and more importantly maintain, 90 per cent Jpeg compression, which equates to BetaCam SP and above. In other words, image quality on a par with the DPS Personal Animation Recorder – otherwise known as the PAR card.

However, with the arrival of the "Draco direct" version, VLM compression will no longer be a consideration. With transfer speeds up to three times faster than Zorro III the "Draco direct" VLM will easily encode real-time full frame video without using any compression whatsoever. And better still DVE decoding and encoding will be done via hardware – making for much faster DVE

The Alpha option

Okay, you've heard the preamble concerning the key elements in the system, but what's it all in aid of? In short, the Draco is a one-stop graphics, digital video and audio solution which will become one of the fastest rendering and digital video effects systems on any desktop.

The aforementioned Dec Alpha co-processor could well prove to be the real key to the Draco's success in the long term – with the first and most obvious beneficiary being the MovieShop software.

Not surprisingly, an expansion slot already awaits a new co-processor which features the fastest chip in the Dec Alpha range, and currently holds the record for the world's fastest micro-processor delivering an astonishing 450 mips – which translates into 10 times the speed of an 50Mhz 060. The end result in MovieShop's case is real-time DVEs in software.

At present, the generation of wipes, fades and special effects can be a fairly lengthy process, especially on more complex DVEs. However, with the arrival of the co-pro, the vast majority of MovieShop SFXs will be real time, while the more complex flying cubes and the like will be generated in near real time.

However, MovieShop need not be the only software to cash in on the power of the Dec Alpha. MacroSystem will be providing a dedicated compiler for anyone wishing to re-compile their software for the Draco co-pro – obvious choices being LightWave, Real 3D and the like.

In the past, the attempts at partial RISC solution on the Amiga OS has fallen at the first hurdle. Nevertheless, the MacroSystems' example does prove that a RISC-based accelerations system, an 060, and the Amiga's existing OS can work – Amiga Technologies please take note.

But unlike its predecessors, the Draco will have the advantage of a solid platform with a user base whose ownership of the machine in itself proves dedication to the DV and computer graphic cause.

What's in the box

As mentioned earlier, mix and match configurations are available for those who already have elements of the system. However, assuming you're starting from scratch, the basic DV system consists of the following: The Vlab Motion, Toccata, Retina and the 060 CPU and I/O combo.

On the storage side you start off with an HD disk drive. The only limitation of which is that the drive is in fact a PC HD floppy. As a consequence, it actually writes Amiga format floppies at roughly half the normal speed.

In addition to the floopy, the Draco also ships with a quad-speed CD-ROM plus 4Mb of RAM as standard. To complement the CD-ROM, MacroSystem will also be supplying a dedicated CD which houses Workbench and installs all the accompanying software and utilities needed to manage the system.

Even more interesting is a plan to incorporate Shape Shifter as a standard part of the Draco software suite. For those unfamiliar with the Shape Shifter, it allows you to define either a file or a partition as a Macintosh.

Add Mac system software and you effectively have a full blown Mac running on your Amiga, or in this case a Draco. However, in order to accomplish the seemingly unthinkable you do need a Mac ROM stored as a file on your machine. Obviously, simply ripping a ROM image out of a Mac is highly illegal. As a consequence, an official deal with Apple is essential. MacroSystem are confident that current negotiations will end in the all-important handshake. And if so, Draco owners will have access to the best of both the Amiga and the Mac.

On the Amiga side, MacroSystem are throwing in the complete ADPro collection including the conversion

Timelines and SFX

When the real time grabbing and importing is complete, and the assorted clips have been trimmed, edited, and appended, the next step is to drop them into the Timeline and add the all-important special effects and additional audio.

The actual process of building the Movie is entirely non-destructive. In reality it simply offers a means of layering and combining existing audio and video into a new sequence. The end result of all this is user-defined sequencing of all the existing scenes – aided by visual and audio effects. If a new clip overlaps an existing element, a fade operator could be dropped between the overlap to produce a digital cross-fade.

This ability to mix and process multiple sequences points to another unique feature of VLM, namely its ability to operate as a digital A/B roll environment with a built-in digital effects processor. Admittedly, this is by no means a real-time process, because once the scenes are arranged, and the operators in position, MovieShop still has to set about processing the video sequence, transitions and effects specified within the Timeline.

Fortunately, this is all done automatically, but it nevertheless takes time as the process is done entirely via software – in a similar way in which ADPro and ImageFX apply effects to single images. Needless to say, Draco's 060 is a real bonus at this stage.

As you've probably guessed, audio is also computed in a similar manner. If, for example, you've added a backing track, or adjusted the envelope within an existing AV soundtrack, a separate computing pass is needed to apply the changes. Fortunately, this process usually takes only a matter of seconds.

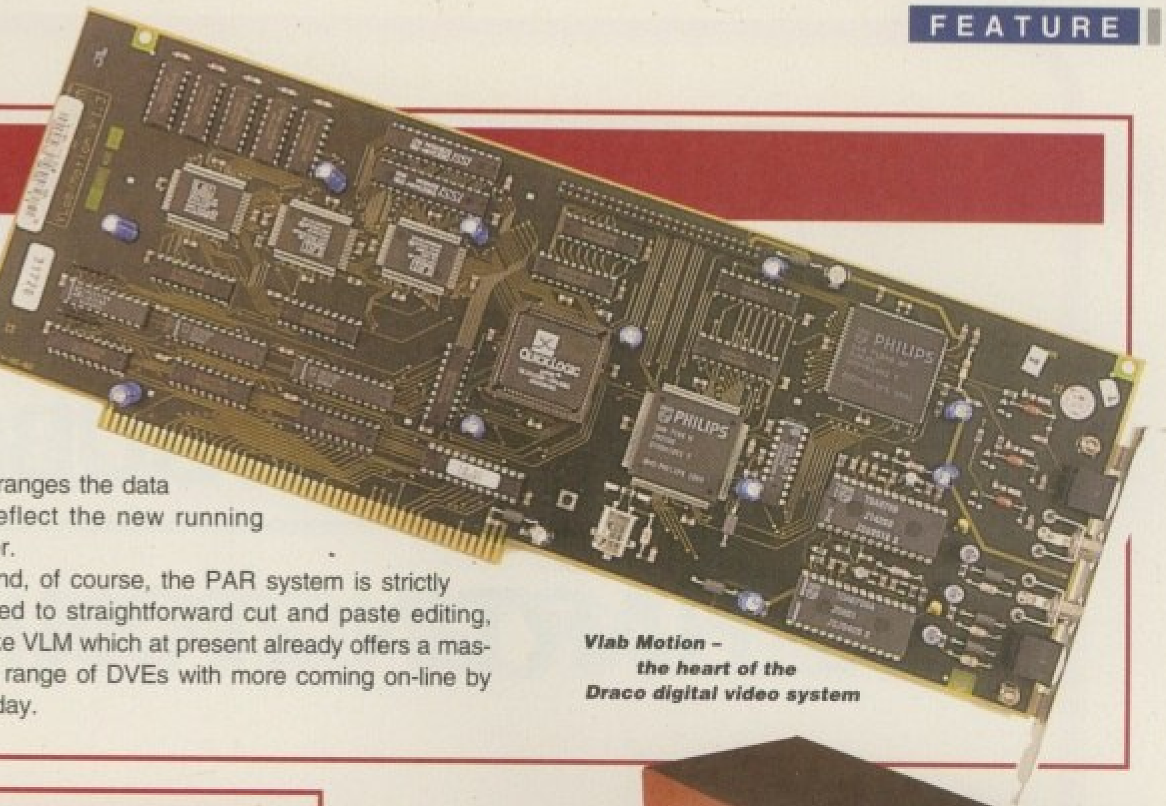
Although the DVE process may sound daunting, after a little practise it becomes second nature. Beginners are catered for via an easy mode in addition to the more complex RPN approach – which can process an almost unlimited number of sequences alongside multiple layered special effects.

An editor's delight

As you've probably gathered, the real essence of the Draco's appeal is its ability to operate as a true off-line editor/digital video effects generator. And in that domain it stands head and shoulders above the opposition.

Unlike the PAR card, actually moving edits around is both easy and, most importantly, instantaneous. Rather than physically moving the data, the VLM and MovieShop combo simply makes a cuelist from the existing data and skips around the drive with the assistance of RAM buffering. As a consequence, making changes to the running order of scenes, or entire movies is instant, whereas the same process on the PAR could literally take hours as the system physically rearranges the data to reflect the new running order.

And, of course, the PAR system is strictly limited to straightforward cut and paste editing, unlike VLM which at present already offers a massive range of DVEs with more coming on-line by the day.



Vlab Motion – the heart of the Draco digital video system

processing. As a result full D2 – the digital video broadcast standard – will be guaranteed. The only problem then will be one of available storage space. To drive the point home the existing Jpeg compression settings will be replaced with a Mb per second – enabling the user to define how much space to use per second of encoded video.

Thanks to such a high degree of image quality, Draco will easily hold its own in the broadcast market, even on a Zorro II VLM – a factor which is backed up by a direct link to BetaCam SP equipment and other broadcast quality hardware. This is thanks to an optional YUV component module which simply slots onto the board.

The only other card that really benefits from a 'Draco direct' connection is the Retina and as that's already alive and kicking, the only other element is the Toccata. However, it remains to be seen if MacroSystem will bother with a 'Draco direct' version as the existing version already works at and above CD quality as standard.

Up and coming

Needless to say the launch of the Dec Alpha co-processor is a major event for the elite. However for mere mortals, investment in a co-pro will hinge on the arrival of re-compiled versions of LightWave and other power applications specifically for the Draco.

In addition to the various bits that have already had a mention, there is one more imminent upgrade waiting in the wings, which like the co-pro is due to coincide with the official Autumn launch of the Draco. The mystery add-on is in fact a new 64-bit graphics card which will provide full a colour preview actually on the MovieShop control screen. Better still, the card will also generate a genlockable signal. Add both of the above to a 64-bit bus and you're looking at a blisteringly fast card that should add the finishing touch to the Draco.

And finally

Aside from the system performance, the price tag itself is bound to attract many a serious Amiga fan, with the basic Draco retailing cheaper than an Amiga 4000 running an 060 accelerator. Not bad for a fully-featured digital video box with the potential for full off-line editing, CD quality audio, broadcast quality digital video effects, and much more besides.

Look at the opposition from the likes of Quantel's Paintbox and various Mac systems and you'll discover the Draco's asking price is tiny in comparison. The only other question, especially in relation to newcomers, is ease of use.

Although generally no more daunting than the average Amiga, there is one aspect of the MovieShop environment that could see some improvement, namely the application of DVEs. To achieve DVEs MovieShop employs a Reverse Polish Notation system to stack and process DVEs on an almost unlimited collection of video clips simultaneously. For the novice, it must be said the process can present something of a hurdle. It would be nice if MacroSystem implemented a GUI in the style of MultiLayer specifically for DVE design.

As for the system as a whole, there are no complaints whatsoever. The beta version tested arrived with all the necessary bits separate from the tower, with one piece of A4 listing the various connections. I wired everything up, hit the power button, and it fired-up first time! Vorsprung durch technik – or something similar.

If you're tired of the trail of broken promises surrounding Amiga development, the Draco deserves serious very attention. But if you're serious about audio, video and computer graphics, the Draco is nothing short of a dream machine.



SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

Hi-res monitor 60Khz+

16 Mb RAM

The bottom line

Produce: Draco
Supplier: MacroSystem
Price: £2750 – with 060, 4Mb video, 4Mb system RAM, quad-speed CD-ROM
£3670 – with all of the above plus Toccata and VLab Motion
Phone: 0049 230 289 177
Fax: 0049 230 280 884

Hard drives sold separately

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**10**
Overall	**9**

Brave new

Jason Compton reports on the state and survival of the Amiga nation in America

The Amiga may have been born and raised to adolescence by an American upstart company in the form of Amiga Incorporated, but after the transfer to Commodore, the Amiga would enjoy much greater success in Europe than on the continent where it got its start. Poor advertising got the machine off to a bad start, but enough Commodore brand loyalists went with the Amiga to keep the market fresh for the advent of desktop video, which the Amiga has thus far had a firm grasp on.

Serious development was largely found on the North American continent for a number of years, but attrition and more lucrative markets have squashed some companies and lured others away. In some areas of Amiga development, most notably the high-end graphics card market, North America is completely reliant on European products, having no home-grown card to consider.



The arrival of each new day seems to bring more and more television and print ads for rival platforms. Confusion over North American distribution rights and policies have only thrown the market into more chaos.

Perhaps the best way to start answering the question, 'where exactly do we stand?' is with a qualified 'Not as bad as it looks.' After all, some things have actually improved measurably over the past few months, namely the availability of general-interest printed Amiga magazines. For a time there was only one, but the introduction of this publication into the market as well as the revival of Amiga Game Zone has made the situation a bit more tolerable.



Some of the crew of AmiTrix Development

Where some software developers have failed or given up, others press onward. Consultron, manufacturers of the astoundingly useful CrossDOS and CrossMAC filesystem packages, are still keeping their heads above water. President Leonard Poma reports that his company's sales are down over the past two years and that there hasn't been a marked improvement since Escom's April acquisition of the Amiga which ended a year of total uncertainty. Still, sales in the



The view of the Amiga Convention '95 show floor

AmiJAM '95

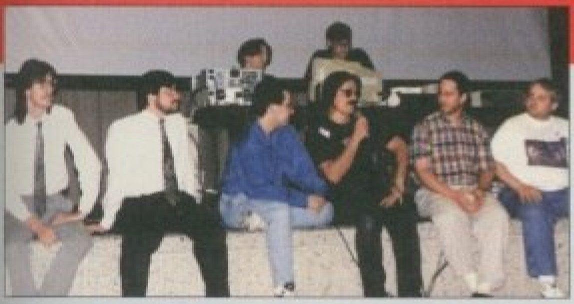
The Amiga Users of Calgary (AMUC) held a successful AmiJAM in 1993, but the prospect of a show in the summer of 1994 was too uncomfortable for the group. The plans went through for 1995 after the formation of Amiga Technologies increased user confidence.

Booked into the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's show floor were Wonder Computers, the aforementioned Canadian dealer/distributor/software development company, Oregon Research, publishers of Termite and On The Ball as well as the distributors of HiSoft products, AmiTrix, an Edmonton-based Amiga development and distribution company, local dealers Software Supermart and The Computer Shop, and Spots, a local Internet service provider with active Amiga support. In addition to booking dealers for the show floor, AMUC brought speakers to the show, made up of local talent, Steve Vetzal, Information Technology Division Head for Wonder Computers, Dave Haynie and Dale Larson, former Commodore engineers, and myself. Dave Haynie's speeches brought the biggest crowds, and they were rewarded with a look at a prototype board for Nyx, the AAA development machine. Sadly, Dave's board no longer works.



Dave Haynie kicks back during an autographing session for his video

Wonder sprawled across nearly a quarter of the show floor, with software piled high off the tables. Of particular note were the products they acquired from New Horizons, most importantly DesignWorks, the structured drawing package, enhanced to version 1.1 by Lazarus Engineering, the Wonder sister software development company. Oregon Research brought



The AmiJAM '95 panel discussion team

their entire Amiga product line and Bob Luneski, the president, spoke of an upcoming refit to On The Ball, the personal organiser package recently acquired from Pure Logic Software. Termite 1.1, the modem terminal program, was available, complete with updated manual.

AmiTrix was showing AmigaLink, the floppy-port networking system it recently acquired distribution rights for. Also on display were the SCSI-TV and SCSI-570, the full SCSI interfaces for the CDTV and A570 that the AmiTrix engineers devised.

The show wound down with a panel discussion made up of Brant Coghlan of AmiTrix, Dale Larson, Dave Haynie, Steve Vetzal and Steve Cockwell from Wonder, and myself. It crystallised the mood of the show, which was one of 'strong concern.' Amiga users are looking for fast action and inspiring decisions, and to date have not been getting what they're looking for.

Also discussed was what the panel would like to see for future development of the Amiga line. PowerPC was a virtually unanimous choice. As Dave Haynie put it: "it will be the only RISC chip with a chance to be priced as a commodity item."

Despite attendance in the hundreds (registered attendance did not break 400, according to reports), the exhibitors were pleased and the organisers were too tired to be concerned. Show admittance was free, and many people came and went without checking in.

Everyone went home happy, and most people were just glad to be in an environment with so much Amiga enthusiasm and energy.

somewhere else to play, so to speak. Upon release of ImageFX 2.0, Nova found their own independent distribution channels rather than publishing through GVP, as they had done in the past.

Many areas of North America have seen their dealerships shrink, consolidate, or disappear altogether. Indeed, I am constantly reminded that Mexico City, the world's largest metropolis, has only one Amiga dealership. What, then, fuels Wonder Computers, a dealership chain that has grown from one store to five in the past few years, has instituted a corporate division for infrastructure management and product distribution, and recently added a software development team to its repertoire?

Based in Ottawa, Canada, with stores in Ottawa, Toronto, London, Montreal, and Vancouver, the answer seems to lie in dedication and making the right decisions in the right places, as well as having an impressive enough presence to instil confidence in the user base.

Each of Wonder's five stores is Amiga-

world of Amigas

high-end market where cross-platform disk sharing is a must have kept the company going and able to support its product line.

Standing in contrast to proud veteran Consultron are new arrivals Phantom Development, publishers of Amiga software. When asked why he decided to get into the Amiga market in its current state, President Christopher Aldi replied simply: "I hate Windows. This is the business I want to be in. Maybe I'm stupid."

First off the Phantom lines is Digital Quill, a high-powered, visually polished text editor by Timothy Aston, and soon to follow will be Hell Pigs, a monstrously large adventure that can be best described as a cross between King's Quest 6 and Zak McCracken and the Alien Mindbenders – with big guns. Classica, the Croatian team developing Hell Pigs, plan an Amiga floppy version,



The manager of GfxBase tries to clear off his table into the shopping bags of the duo in front of him

an Amiga CD-ROM version with full motion video clips, as well as a PC conversion.

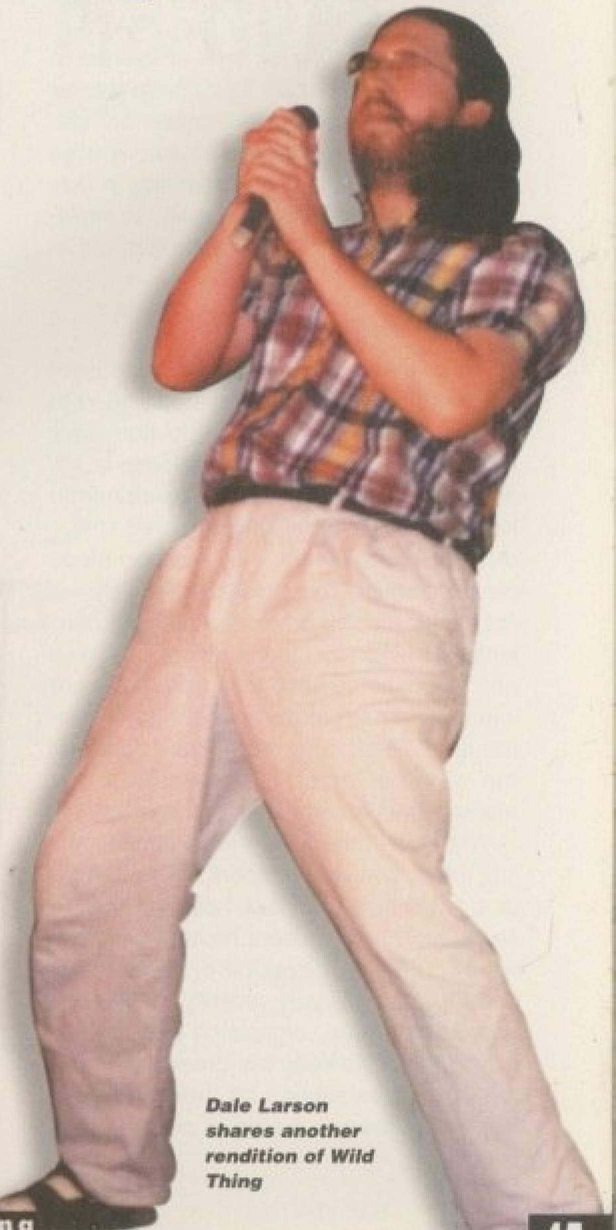
In between these stark comparisons sits Nova Design, the three-man software company famous for ImageFX, the professional image manipulation package. They survived the collapse and sale of GVP by taking their ball and finding

American dream

In short, there are a lot of questions in the North American market and no easy answers. The decision to spend no marketing dollars this year was a difficult one to accept for many. While the argument is certainly true that this is not the strongest market historically for the Amiga, the potential-and existing-customer base cannot be ignored.

At this point, sitting back, sipping that cup of coffee you just bought and riding out the situation is not a bad idea. Gilles Bourdin of Amiga Technologies PR has asked North Americans to send him articles mentioning the Amiga in major press publications. Former engineers such as Dale Larson have interviewed with ISE, the new subcontractor for Amiga engineering. The questions are not easy, but the answers, slowly, are forthcoming.

And even more importantly, the dealer and development support is still here. Yes, there is no more GVP to flagship the Amiga on this continent. But the community survives. The users, developers and dealers are doing as much as they can, as evidenced by their continuing dedication and support. It is now Amiga Technologies' market to make or break.



Dale Larson shares another rendition of Wild Thing



The assembled cast of the AmiJAM '95 speakers, presenters, and organisers



Ian and Steve, two die-hard Amiga fans at the recent Amiga bash

➤

only, barring the occasional video product. Wonder's deal for distribution rights of the Quasar Distribution product line (primarily consisting of Chris Hames' DirWork and PC-Task packages) put them on the map, and their purchase of the New Horizons 'B-Pack' of software, including DesignWorks, QuickWrite, and QuarterBack added a ready-made, if slightly dated, suite of a dozen products they could develop or sell outright at their option. (QuarterBack has already been sold to Quasar.) Wonder's services even include classes on the Amiga, held in a small computer lab environment.

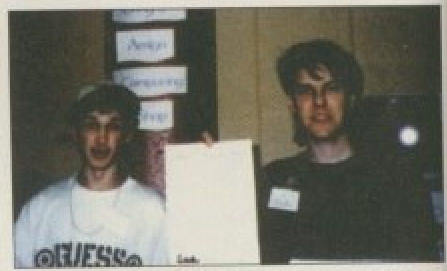
There certainly is no lack of interest in Amiga distribution on this continent, as demonstrated by the half-dozen companies that participated in Amiga Technologies' impromptu meeting in July which attempted, unsuccessfully, to implement a solid distribution arrangement in North America.

DISTRIBUTION ROLE

Alex Amor of Creative Equipment International, who has repeatedly tried to secure an agreement for distribution, says he is "anxiously awaiting the release of the Amiga Technologies line of machines in North America." It is unclear what role a distributor would play – it has been made clear by Amiga Technologies that they will not spend a dollar on North American marketing in 1995, and at the recent UK press and dealer conference they said they were interested in a 'partner' rather than a 'distributor.' This could dramatically change the way the Amiga is presented to the market when an agreement is reached.

What truly drives the Amiga market isn't just the software developers or the dealers or the distributors. In fact, I daresay they're secondary. Amiga users have stepped up where software developers, distributors, and dealers, until very recently, have been unwilling to tread, organising and holding Amiga shows to keep the dream alive and to retain active support for their machines, even if it means being a part of that support. AC

Amiga Convention '95



Garnet and Mark – Oby's Amigo Computing Shop

Just over a month later, on the other side of Canada, Amiga Convention '95 kicked off. On paper the two shows don't look all that different. Dale Larson and Jason Compton booked as speakers. Wonder Computers to anchor the dealer floor. Two days, ending in a panel discussion. But just as every city has its own flavour, every Amiga show has its own lasting impressions.

For one, AC '95 took a different approach to the off-floor entertainment. While AmiJAM was very heavy on speeches and presentations, booking two different rooms through most hours of the day, AC had only one presentation room, which had demo, music, and graphics competitions in addition to the booked speakers. The organisers plan to make the winning entries freely available on Aminet FTP.

On the floor, the dealer presence was more noticeable, perhaps because they were cramped more closely together – a testament to the number that were booked. Dealers Oby's Amiga Computing Shop, GfxBase, and National Amiga were on hand with products to sell. Pre'Spect Technologies had their own display of products including the MultiFace II and IV cards, which they now manufacture on license from bsc, the original development company. AsimWare were on hand with their AsimCDFS CD-ROM filesystem, complete with CD32 emulation, which president Paul Reeves took delight in demonstrating by playing hours of Super Stardust CD32.

While he did not man a dealer table for long, Hal Greenlee had flyers on hand and on display for the Micronik 4000 Tower, a custom Amiga 4000 tower system manufactured in Germany with a special daughterboard offering expanded slots for the machine. As mentioned, Wonder Computers had a large display of software and hardware at their tables, including enhanced New Horizons software. Rick Sulpizio, distributor of the MacroSystem Germany product line in Canada, had the V-Lab Motion set up for impressive displays of real-time non-linear editing. Unfortunately, he did not have the Draco 060-based Amiga-compatible non-linear editing computer with him. (See the exclusive review of the Draco in this issue – ed.)



Most dealers kept a cheery disposition as the 12-hour days marched on. Oby's sold every copy of Gloom they brought (greatly assisted by the fact that they had a two-player networked display set up for attendees to play), and National Amiga covered the entire cost of the trip the first day.

Dale Larson, who now makes his living as President of Intangible Assets Manufacturing, gave his presentation on networking Amigas – a logical choice, since his company produces Amiga Envoy 2.0 and the book Connect Your Amiga!, as well as publishing Dave Haynie's Deathbed Vigil documentary and DiskSalv utility.

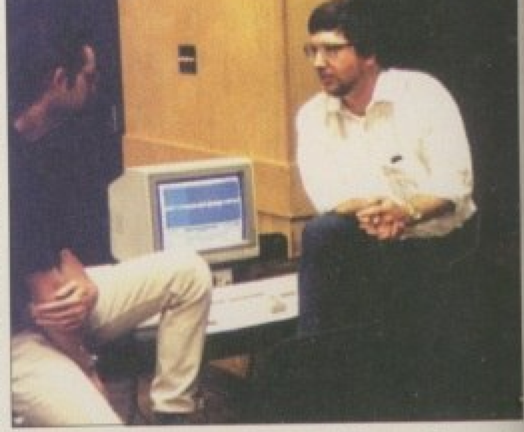
Al Mackey of MegaBall fame gave a stunning art demonstration on Digital Creations' Brilliance paint program. I made the mistake of leaving the room when a rough sketch was on the screen, and when I returned two minutes later, a full-colour cartoon drawing greeted me.

My speech was a consolidated version of the two speeches on emulation I gave at AmiJAM. The crowd indulged my strange desires to play old Commodore 64 games on Amiga screens.

The panel discussion closed the event with Dale Larson, Peter Cherna (also late of Commodore and now employed on PC development at Scala), Greg Scott, president of National Amiga, and myself. Most of the audience's questions were aimed at the former Commodore folk, feeling out their theories for future development and the potential for the Amiga in the marketplace.



Paid attendance was roughly that of the registered attendance at AmiJAM. Those that came had essentially the same questions and concerns as the first time around – when will we see new products? When will we be supported? When will we be convinced that this isn't Commodore all over again?



Bob Luneski (centre), President of Oregon Research

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Preaching to the converted

Transparently import any picture format into any program. Sounds like a good idea to Neil Mohr

Typical – Commodore create a way for a program to be able to load any type of file type it needs to, and no one uses it. What is needed is a program that will sit in between the datatypes and the application program, quietly converting any files that are loaded.

Datachrome is meant to do exactly that. Once activated it will intercept any load request, see if the file type being loaded is a supported datatype, and if it is, Datachrome will convert the file to a normal IFF version of that file which is what your program actually ends up loading.

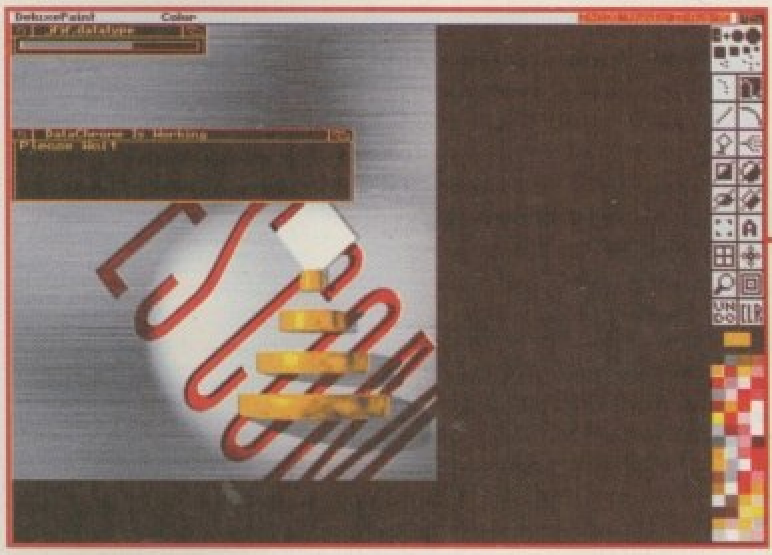
In use this can cause problems. Firstly, you must make sure you remove the icon datatype from the Devs:Datatype drawer. Otherwise, when you open a window on Workbench, Datachrome will intercept every icon file and convert it to an IFF file. This is then passed to Workbench which, not surprisingly, gets very confused.

INTERCEPTING

Another side effect is that any programs that use external graphics will cause Datachrome to intercept the load calls. If you are using a MUI application this can get a little annoying, especially as MUI already supports datatypes.

The general side effect is that the Datachrome message requester pops up unexpectedly, which is both annoying and slows the computer down somewhat.

Installation of Datachrome is a breeze, thanks to the standard Amiga installer program, and the fact there are only four files to install. The main Datachrome executable is only 14k, so will fit on a floppy with no problem at all.



Load Jpegs into DPaint

The actual Datachrome program is very simple, comprising two tick boxes and two buttons, allowing you to activate Datachrome and disable the conversion requester. It is possible to change the directory where the temporary converted files are stored. This last point is of particular use to hard drive users because you can save precious memory by using the hard drive to store the converted file.



It's a breeze Final Writer

In general use Datachrome work fine – programs like Final Writer, Dpaint and Brilliance all work perfectly with Datachrome. My main criticism is the actual control program – it is far too basic. For starters, it should have been implemented as a commodity, allowing the usual hot keys to activate and deactivate Datachrome and to pop the GUI to the front. It would also be very handy if you could have a list of datatypes to exclude from conversion, along with a list of programs Datachrome should ignore.

Due to the problems with Datachrome intercepting all the load calls, it is not possible to leave it running in the background as it just interferes with other programs far too often. Datachrome does what it says it should do, the problem is, it could do it a little better.

Available datatypes

Included with Datachrome:	Other datatypes:
	Tiff
Jpeg	Targa
GIF	PNG
PCX	Reko
Windows BMP	X BitMap
MacPict	DeBox
Window Icon	Sun Raster

What are datatypes

Datatypes were introduced with version 3.0 of the Amiga's operating system and are based on the object-oriented design methodology, part of which includes the need for logic normalisation.

What does that mean? I hear some of you cry. Well basically, why should every programmer, for every program, have to write their own code to handle loading different file formats. Surely it would be far better if one person wrote the load routines and allowed any program to access them.

Datatypes allow programmers to use a single interface to load any supported type of file format, some of which may or may not be known to the programmer now or in the future.

The PNG datatype is a prime example of this. Say a program was written last year that supported the loading of picture datatypes. That programmer could not have possibly known anything about the PNG datatype, as it didn't even exist. Yet with the release of the PNG datatype, their program can load PNG pictures just as easily as if they were IFFs.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

3.0 Workbench — Hard drive

The bottom line

Product: DataChrome
Supplier: Chroma
Price: £29.95
Phone: 01328 862693

Ease of use	**8**
Implementation	**5**
Value for money	**7**
Overall	**6**

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Key

[WB2+] Workbench 2+ Only

[WB3+] Workbench 3+ Only

[2D] Number of Disks

[1MB] Minimum Memory

[AGA] For AGA Machines

[030] Minimum Processor

[HD] Hard Drive Needed

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U649 enLOCK Lock program for a hard drive [WB2+]

U650 BOOKIE BEATER Beat the bookie at his own game! [WB2+]

U653 SKIDMARKS 2 CARS 4 cars for the **AGA** Skidmarks [2 D]

U655 AUTOSTEREOGRAM v4B New version of the popular sterogram maker. [WB2+]

U656 SUPER DMS v2 A powerful interface for DMS. [WB2+]

U658 DOPUS v5>>>>v5.11 UPGRADE Upgrade your **original** DOpus to v5.11.

U661 PAGESTREAM v3G>>>>3H upgrade to PGS v3H [2D]

U662 MUI v3B Beta version of MUI version 3. [WB2+] [HD]

U663 TURBOSUITE v3.3 catalogue your disks [WB2+]

U664 BASIC ELECTRONICS v1.1 want to learn the basics of electronics? Here is a disk to show you how. [Not AGA]

U666 IMAGE DESK v1.60 Image Desk is the best picture thumbnail program on the PD market. [WB2+]

U668 VIRUS WORKSHOP v5.4 latest virus killer [WB2+]

U669 VIRUS CHECKER v6.57 another virus killer [WB2+]

U670 TERM v4.4 00 Term is the most comprehensive communications package in PD, rivals any commercial release. [3D]

U671 TERM v4.4 030 version for 030 processors [3D]

U672 ORGANISER BITS a collection of supplements for Digita's Organiser. [needs Digita Organiser]

U674 ZXAM SPECTRUM EMULATOR v2B NEW Spectrum Emulator. You need an **AGA Amiga or 020+ processor.**

U675 DIALLING CODES v2.11 want to know a telephone code? This also allows you to type a code and find the area. [WB2+]

U677 EASY CALC v2B superb spreadsheet program [WB2+]

U678 STEREO OPTICON produce 3D (true 3D!) stereoptical images that are viewed through 3D glasses similar to Jaws 3D! Original!

U679 AREXX GUIDE v2A want to learn Arexx? [WB2+]

U680 MOSAIC v2B latest version of the Web browser. [WB2+] [TCP 4]

U681 SHAPE SHIFTER v3.1 is the much-raved latest version of the superb Apple Mac emulator [020+][WB 2.1+][4 MB+][HD Recommended]

U682 VARK'S CLI TOOLS VOL 8 50 latest CLI tools - get this!

U683 IMAGE STUDIO v2.2 50 latest CLI tools - get this!

U684 ESSENTIAL AMINET 8 50 latest CLI tools - get this!

U685 MIDI TRIGGER 50 latest CLI tools - get this!

LATEST GAMES

GM238 LAST LAP v1 Excellent racing game for one or two players.

GM239 ULTIMATE STAR TREK Quite old but a great strategy game by Tobias Richter. [2 Disks]

GM242 PSYCHUEL Alien Breed style shoot am up [WB2+]

GM245 THE PYRAMID GAME A puzzle platform game. [2 Disks]

GM247 KLONDIKE III This is a special version of Klondike for disk users only! [6 Disks] [3MB]

GM248 DELUXE PACMAN AGA Wow a pacman game by the author of Deluxe Galaga.

GM249 DELUXE PACMAN ECS

GM258 BATTLESHIPS A very playable game by the Assassins.

GM259 EGG SCRAMBLE Mad, mad game. Very colourful platformer.

GM260 GEMZ addictive puzzle game

GM263 CODENAME NANO superb thrust game. Get it!

GM264 SCORTCHED TANKS v1.85

GM265 DATASTORM [2 Disks]

GM266 BLITZ BOMBERS the popular multi-player bombers game

GM267 NIMBLE! another addictive puzzle game

GM268 EXCELLENT CARD GAMES III A set of different card games on here. [AGA]

GM269 MASTER BLASTER II decent bomb game

GM270 TRONICS tron/light phasers game. Addictive

GM271 SUPER COMBAT 3 this is a two player version of cannon fooder. Superb graphics - Object to kill other player. [3 D]

GM272 DR. STRANGE 2 top notch platform romp

GM273 REBELLION an asteroids clone with a difference

GM274 R3 is a 1/2 player smooth scrolling thrust game

GM275 MARATHON 2 player action game

GM276 THE DEVILS ABODE written by the author of War of the Worlds. This is a 3D horror adventure. Decent.

GM277 SPEED - DOOMER 2 version 2 of the Doom clone. More graphics, finer detail (walls etc) and much faster scrolling. [AGA]

GM278 DNX erm...blatent Super Stardust tunnel game! [AGA][2 D]

GM279 ALIEN BASH II very similar to Chaos Engine....very good.

GM280 SKID RACER car racing game, not bad.

GM281 DUCK DODGERS great platform game with ducks

GM282 TRAP 'EM from the author of the decent Jump 'em

GM283 ZOMBIES Alien Breed style shoot-em-up [AGA]

GM284 DARK ANGEL Flashback style, platform in a power complex

GM285 BLACK DAWN V another version of the great adventure

GM286 GALLEONS 2 player 3D shoot-em-up

GM287 ENGINES 2 player thrust game [WB2+]

HOT NEW DEMOS

D203 MYSTIC "IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBILITY" Winner of the Primavera party 95. Get this! [2 Disks] [4MB+] [AGA]

D204 TRSI "ANHALONIUM LENINI Quite a decent demo from TRSI, this time! [AGA]

D213 PARALLEX/CCN "DEEP" Winner of the Gathering 95 [2 Disks] [HD] [4MB+] [AGA]

D216 FACULTY "MAN ON MOON" Very good demo from Faculty - needs loads of Mem! [4 Disks] [HD] [6MB+] [AGA]

D217 ABYSS "DRUGSTORE" [2 Disks]

D218 OXYRON "TEMPLE OF DECEASE"

D219 SANITY "ROOTS II" wow! A very decent demo release [020+]

D220 FREEZERS "DREAM WALKER" [2 Disks]

D221 FREEZERS "LECH" AGA won the Ram Jam charts "best demo in 1995". Loads of the same routines - tunnels etc.

D222 ARTWORK "GREENDAY" Won a recent party in Germany - very decent all round. [AGA] [HD] [3 Disks]

D223 IMPACT DK "MELCHOIR" [HD] [6MB+]

D226 SUPREME "CHAOS" [HD]

D227 SCOOPEX "ALIEN" Scoopex are BACK in the '90s with a good demo release! [AGA]

D228 STELLAR "HUMAN" Stellar release "Human excrement in ....", lets say no more!

D229 VIVIAT "SLOVIAK" [2 Disks]

Latest demos continued........

D230 MELON "PLANET M" another classic release from the guys at melon. Released at a party in the Netherlands recently.

D231 AXIS "PICTURE BOOK" must be one of the best demo releases for many months, comprehensive. [AGA] [4 Disks]

D233 AIDSYNTHETIC DESIGN "TENEBRA"

D234 INTERACTIVE "ABSTRACT" another release from the party in the Netherlands. Excellent routines. [HD] [4 MB]

D235 MELON DESIGN "BAYGON" superb cartooney style demo!

D236 EMBASSY "THRILLED" Assembly '95 release [HD][2 Disks]

D237 SILENTS "FRUIT MACHINE" superb Assembly '95 demo!

D238 VANITY "AMAZED" stunning new demo from Vanity

D239 OXYGENE "CONTROL" from the G.A.S.P. party '95. [2 D]

D240 PARALLEX "ZIF" G.A.S.P. winner. Good. [2 D] [AGA] [HD]

MISCELLANEOUS

GRAPEVINE 21 superb disk magazine from LSD [2 Disks]

GRAPEVINE 22 call for date (September?)

DEADLOCK 9 superb disk magazine by Anathema/Narcosis

NFA WORD 5 disk magazine from NFA [AGA]

NFA WORD 6 disk magazine from NFA [AGA]

NFA WORD 7 call for release date and details (August)

NFA BODYSHOP 8 [AGA] [3 Disks]

SHERILYN FENN SLIDESHOW [AGA]

PHEOBE CATES SLIDESHOW [AGA]

ERIKA ELENAIK SLIDESHOW [AGA]

NIKI TAYLOR SLIDESHOW [2 D] [AGA]

TINY TOONS CLIPART superb hand drawn clipart

NFA BIG GIRLS II [AGA] [3 Disks]

X-FILES GUIDE guide to the TV Show

GCSE MATHS EXAM PAPERS GCSE help

TRAVEL GUIDE guide for avid world travellers [2 Disks]

UFO : FINDING THE TRUTH [2 Disks]

UFO : FINDING THE TRUTH 3 paranormal and UFO stuff

ALIENS CONFIDENTIAL 2 UFO and paranormal guide

WEATHER GUIDE [3 Disks]

LUCIFERS "UNHOLY INNOCENCE" [2 D]

LUCIFERS "WICKED GRIMOIRE" bizarre cult stuff

LUCIFERS "BOOK OF SHADES" [2 D]

STAR TREK GUIDE learn about Star Trek [6 Disks]

ED060 KIDS DISK 7 another under 5's program

SCOOPEX "ARTCORE" Doom-like gallery slideshow! [AGA]

NFA SOURCE 'N CODE 2 AMOS source 'disk' magazine

MAIN LIBRARY

MORE UTILITIES

U076 WB3 HD INSTALL DISK Prep, format and install WB to your Hard Drive. [WB3]

U230 TOOLS DAEMON V2.1 Adds tools to your WB Menu. [WB2+]

U239 RE-ORG v3.11 Re-organise your disks/hard disk. [WB2+]

U302 VIEWTEK v2.01 Viewtek can show many picture formats including JPEG and the AGA screen modes. [WB2+]

U317 ACTION REPLAY PRO Action Replay for the A1200 [AGA]

U318 VIDEOTRACKER DATA Loads of data files for use within Videotracker. [4 D]

U349 LIBRARIES + DATATYPES Do you ever need a library? Here's a collection!

U352 MAGIC WB v1.2P The lastest version of the 8-colour icon replacer. Use this with our Extras disks for superb results! [WB2+]

U359 TELETEXT v1.20 Create a teletext receiver [WB2+]

U376 POWERCACHE v37.115 Speed up your Hard Drive access with this cache program. Versions for 00, 020, 030 and 040. [WB2+]

U379 DESKTOP MAGIC v2.0 This program allows you to assign sounds to Workbench functions like mouse clicking etc. [WB2+]

U408 DISK SALV v2.31 This is the best disk/file repairer in the Public Domain. Undelete/salvage files and repair disks.

U416 AMIGA DOS GUIDE v1 Learn Amiga DOS with this program.

U426 EPU STAKKER v1.70 double your hard drive space! [WB2+]

U434 EDWORD PRO v5 Edword Pro is the most comprehensive and easy to use word processor on the PD market. [WB2+]

U440 SNOOPDOS v3 Use Snoopdos to monitor program activity. An ideal tool to find out what libraries are needed [WB2+]

U453 MAIN ACTOR v1.55 An excellent module animation player. Buy it. [WB2+]

U454 VIDEOTRACKER 2 AGA The AGA demomaker.

U467 T. U.D. E. v1.0D The Ultimate Degrader and Enchancer can be used to degrade A1200/4000's to use WB1.3, remove fast mem etc.

U475 RELOKICK v1.4A FINAL Relokick is the most popular degrader around. Forget the fake v1.41, this is the real thing.

U479 MSDOS FOR AMIGADOS Allows you to use the MS DOS commands on your Amiga. Also use the MSDOS star "*.*" [WB2+]

U480 HD GAMES INSTALLER II Install Jungle Strike, Aladdin, Mortal Kombat II, Ruff 'n Tumble and about 12 more!!

U487 BIRTHDATE HISTORY v2.21 Check events that happened on your birthday!

U499 M.U.I. V2.3 Create GUInterfaces. Needed for Mosaic. [WB2+]

U502 GBLANKER V3.6 020 An optimised version for 020/30/40/60 CPU's. [WB3+]

U510 FINAL FAX/SUPER DUPER v3.13 Final Fax allows you to control GPFax from Final Writer, sending a fax from a normal document.

U514 DISK STICK v1.1 A disk labelling program.

U517 FINAL WRITER 030 PATCH Excellent! A patch which turns the release 3 Final Writer into an optimised 030 version. Get this!!

U521 ADDRESS PRINT v4 Store addresses and print them to labels.

U523 DOPUS MAGIC COMPANIAN Loads of buttons, AREXX scripts for Dopus. [WB2+]

U532 ALL NEW FINAL WRAPPER v3 Final Wrapper was the utility that hit Final Writer users last year. This is the very latest version.

U533 CAR DATA ANALYST Monitor and test your car's performance. First for the Amiga.

U543 TOOLS MANAGER Allows you to have a "dock" of icons on Wbench. [2 Disks][WB2+]

U550 VMM v3 Virtual memory program. [WB2+] [NEEDS MMU] [020+]

U553 GFX CONVERTOR v1.7 Decent graphics convertor. Loads about 10 different file formats and saves GIF, ILBM, PCX, POSTSCRIPT, JPEG. [WB2+]

U554 SOUND BOX v1.97 Coverts sound samples from IFF, RAW, WAV, MAESTRO, VOC, AIFF and MAUD to any of the supported formats. ie. load in as IFF save as WAV or load as WAV andsave as IFF. [WB2+]

U560 DELITRACKER II v2.1 A great module player. [WB2+] [2 D]

More utilities continued........

U564 EXOTIC RIPPER v3.1 module and sample ripper. [WB2+]

U568 LOTTERY WINNER V2.0 good lottery predictor. [WB2+]

U576 BLITZ BLANKER V2.5 Blitz Blanker is another tool that requires the services of MUI (U499). Modularised screen blanker. [WB2+]

U581 PAGESTREAM 3F>G PTCH This patch vastly improves Pagestream 3F. It gives you landscape non-postscript printing! [2 D]

U588 PC-TASK V3.10 All new PC Task v3. Demo version.

U589 MP LOTTERY V2 Another good lottery program.

U592 VARK CLI UTILS 7 All the latest CLI utilities here!

U594 AMIGA FAX V1.42 Send/receive faxes on your Amiga. [WB2+]

U606 ESSENTIAL AMINET 5 recent Aminet uploads. [WB2+]

U607 ESSENTIAL AMINET 4 more recent Aminet uploads. [WB2+]

U617 HD GAMES INSTALL 3 Over 20 games such as Super Skidmarks, Sensible World of Soccer to be installed. [WB2+]

U618 TEXTURE STUDIO v1.02 For Imagine users - adapt those textures. [WB2+]

U619 BALLS! Superb and powerful Lottery program. [AGA]

U623 AMIGA CD-ROM GUIDE Guide to loads of Amiga CDs - Amigaguide doc. [WB2+]

U628 ICONIAN v2.91 Superb AGA icon editor. [AGA]

U629 DIY REKO v2 Construct Klondike cards. [WB2+] [IMAGE FX 2]

U634 FRODO v1.5 The very best C64 emulator for the Amiga. Relive the old games with this. [WB2+] [020+]

U635 DOPUS UTILS 2 Loads of utils for Directory Opus 4/5. More scripts, Arexx routines etc etc [WB2+] [Dopus]

U636 TYPING DEMON Learn how to type very quickly !

U638 ESSENTIAL AMINET 7 Aminet utilities. [WB2+]

U645 FINAL WRITER v3 PCH REV 7 For 030+ processors - speed increase Final Writer version 3.

MORE GAMES

GM58 BLACK DAWN II a popular 3D adventure

GM67 SCRABBLE the classic board game

GM78 STARWOIDS thrust and oids mixed [1MB] [2 DISKS]

GM97 TOP HAT WILLY an Amiga "Jet Set Willy" rip-off. Addictive!

GM105 DYNAMITE WARRIORS 2

GM118 CHANEQUES yes, two please!! A Lemmings type game. Direct your little men (with different skills) to the end. [2 Disks]

GM123 MEGABLOCK V2 the best Tetris games on the Amiga.

GM125 KELLOGS LAND WOW! The very best PD platform game ever! [AGA]

GM126 SUPER MEGA FRUITS a good Fruit Machine game.

GM127 ZAXXON superb! The C64 classic now comes to the Amiga!

GM130 FISHY FISHY eat the small fish, avoid the sharks and grow!

GM132 SAMURAI SHOWDOWN this is an amusing Street Fighter clone. Good! [AGA]

GM136 CYBERMAN wow! A 3D pacman clone. Very decent indeed.

GM138 INTERNAL COMBUSTION great skidmarks-esque multi-player racing game

GM141 MADHOUSE a graphical adventure game [2 DISKS]

GM147 DELUXE GALAGA v2.51 must be the best PD shoot-em-up ever made!

GM194 BATTLE DUEL AGA battle duel is a SUPERB multi-player artillery type game. [AGA]

GM195 BATTLE DUEL ECS ECS version of the above [WB2+]

GM226 GLOOM A demo version of the forthcoming Doom clone. [AGA]

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KL099 Premier League '95 Cards

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KL105 VT Chicks Cards 18+

KL106 Erika Eleniak Cards

KL107 Wild Life Cards

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KL110 Landscapes Cards

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KL114 Everton Winners Cards

KL115 NFA Mask Cards

KL116 Marine Fish Cards

KL117 Birds 1 Cards

KL118 Birds 2 Cards

KL119 Pinnocio Cards

KL120 True Lies Cards

KL121 Airbrush Cards

KL122 Harley Davidson Cards

KL123 Boris Hajime 2 Cards

KL124 Star Wars Galaxy Cards

KL125 Renders Cards

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KL137 Time Cop Cards

KL138 Speccy 1 Cards

KL139 Speccy 2 Cards

KL140 Jap Anim Cards

KL141 Toonies Cards

KL142 Bikini Babes 1 Cards

KL143 Manga Maniax 2 Cards

KL144 Imagine Cards

KL145 Bill Graham Cards

KL146 World Atlas Cards

KL147 Aviation Cards

KL148 Scenic Cards

KL149 Lion King 2 Cards

KL150 Wildlife 2 Cards

KL151 X-Files Cards

KL152 X-Files 2 Cards

KL153 Guardian Cards

KL154 Lion King III Cards

KL155 M.G. Cars Cards

KL155 Safari Cards

KL156 Buildings Cards

KL157 Big Cats Cards

KL158 Killer Instinct Cards

KL159 The Sky Cards

KL160 Dogs Cards

KL161 Places Cards

KL162 Dani & Kylie Cards

KL163 Deep Space 9 Cards

KL164 Misc Art Cards

KL165 Texture Cards

KL166 Fish Cards

KL167 Batman 3 Cards

KL168 Voyager Cards

F1 LICENCEWARE

F1-14 TOTS TIME £3.99 ideal for younger users

F1-31 POWERBASE v3.3 £3.99 database ,

F1-33 POWER PLANNER £3.99 personal organiser

F1-41 GRAND PRIX MANAGER £3.99 run your own grand prix racing team. 1994 season. Recommended.

F1-50 GUIDE TO AMOS v2 £4.99 absolute beginners guide to Amos. Superb guide to help you understand!

F1-56 GIDDY 2 £3.99 Sequel to Giddy.

F1-62 JUNIOR ARTIST £3.99 Learn how to draw

F1-67 BUBBLE TRUBBLE £4.99

F1-68 AQUANAUTA £3.99 superb game. Get this!

F1-74 AMIGA ASSIST £3.99 beginners guide

F1-76 OBSTICKLE £3.99 superb platform romp!

F1-81 AQUAKON AGA £5.99 A little like Doom on water.

F1-83 IMAGE COMPRESSOR £3.99 for AMOS coders

F1-84 WORD PLUS+ PRO v1.3 £4.99 Want to know a word - get this! Used to sell for £14.95!

F1-86 LEGIONS OF DAWN £4.99 Sci-Fi Dungeon Master type game. Choice of several characters and loads of weapons.

F1-87 LEGIONS OF DAWN £4.99 hard drive version

F1-102 AURIGA £4.99 very decent Strider clone

More games continued........

GM150 ROCKETZ V2.25 superb AGA only 2-player thrust/shoot-em-up game. One of the most addictive multi-player games ever! [AGA]

GM164 CYBERGAMES excellent! A street-fighter clone with gore! This is probably the best beat-em-up games in the Public Domain. [2D]

GM169 MASH Similar to Team 17s new Wormz game. A subtle cross between Lemmings and Cannon Fodder.

GM174 TANKS! excellent tank-war sim

GM176 ALIEN GENOCIDE erm. A Operation Wolf clone? [2 DISKS]

GM178 DOOMER a good Doom clone for the Amiga [AGA] [HD]

GM180 CARNAGE blood, guts and gore and more!

GM183 PSSST AGA remember Psst on the Speccy? Well this is the Amiga version!

GM184 SCREECH another car racing game

GM185 BOARD GAMES Cluedo is the main game here

GM187 FEARS 2 AGA wow! Much better. This is a demo of the finished commercial version! More aliens.

GM188 CARD GAMES DELUXE A program that allows you to load and use your Klondike cards! Blackjack and another on here [3 Disks]

GM191 CHILD MURDERER AGA not as bad as it sounds! A graphical adventure to solve the mystery to clear your name [4 Disks]

GM192 CHILD MURDERER ECS [3 Disks]

GM193 SPRINGTIME

GM227 WAR OF THE WORLDS 4 A virtual reality program! [AGA]

GM228 KING HIGH A new card game

MAGIC WB EXTRAS

These contain icons, backdrops, drawers, tools manager brushes and docks and much much more!

Magic WB Extras volume 1 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 2 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 3 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 4 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 5 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 6 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 7 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 8 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 9 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 10 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 11 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 12 [2 Disks]

Magic WB Extras volume 13 [2 Disks]

Buy all 13 volumes for £23.99 or each volume at £1.98

GLOOM



Gloom is an Amiga Doom-clone that satisfies all expectations. A 1 or 2 player shoot-em-up, with the option of connecting two Amiga's through the null modem cable. The first 'real' Doom game this offers an atmospheric and frightening arena full of different enemies with all the guts and gore you can imagine. Rated 91% in Amiga Format - "smashing". Get this before stocks run out!

A1200 £22.99

CD32 £22.99

[2MB+][HD INSTALL]

Have you been Gloomed?

Fears 2 out late August, same prices as for Gloom. Look out for extra levels for both games out in the next few months!

GRAC v1.10



Do you admire the commercial games cush as Monkey Island and other adventure games and wish you could program your own version? With the Graphic Adventure Creature v1.10 you can easily make a point and click adventure game like Relics of Deldroneye. This version fixes bugs in v1 and comes with an extensive manual for your reference. Get this now!

£6.99

BLACKBOARD 4



Part of the new F1 GOLD range this excellent image processor now comes with an extensive fully featured ring bound manual. The new version contains an online help routine, new file formats, new edit facilities, rotate pictures to any angle in 3D, new buffer routines with upto 99 pictures in RAM, new extensive preference links, thumbnail images, mask functions and new GUI frontend!

£8.99

INTRO TO DOS 2

WOW! Version 2 of the superb guide and introduction to Workbench and Amiga DOS. Version one obtained superb grades in a number of magazines - eg 90% in AUI and 92% in Amiga Shopper. Do you want to learn how to use your Amiga? This has twice as much information as the first version, with examples pictures. The easiest way to learn about DOS commands, the CLI or about Workbench.

£6.99

MAGIC PAINT BOX

Magic Paint Box is a superb new paint program for all ages. Mainly aimed at children under 8 years of age this is suitable for parents to easily demonstrate to their children its simplicity yet powerful features. Excellent front end, 84 different painting tools and the ability to print full colour pictures direct from the program to any colour printer. Over 80 different paint functions! Comes with full reference manual.

£6.99

CD-ROM SOFTWARE

KLONDIKE GOLD

Have you entered the race to collect Klondike cards before your friends? Even the Amiga 'scene' has gone Klondike mad! This CD should contain over 250 cards (our aim is for over 275 with many exclusive cards constructed by scene members) all ready-to-run and in LHA format (for BBS and HD use). All categorised into sections all your favourites are here and many more. Also includes Klondike III, Card Games Deluxe, Cardz and tools such as DIY Reko, REKO GIO for Photogenics, REKO datatype etc. This CD is ideal for a collector, someone interested in buying Klondike or any card fan. Superb!

DUE OUT LATE SEPTEMBER £9.99

F1 LICENCEWARE volume one - F1-01 to F1-100

This CD contains the complete collection of F1 Licenceware titles from F1-001 to F1-100. Over 100 titles or more than 200 disks! This CD is worth well over £500, if the disks were bought separately. There is something for everyone on the CD - games, utilities, tools, professional clipart and music, beginners guides, educational programs and much more. Choose from the award winning Blackboard v3 to Junior Artist or from Tots Time to GRAC (the best ever selling F1 title with 100's of copies sold so far). You can blast some aliens with Aquanaut, learn about AMOS through theGuide to Amos, teach your kids how to draw with Junior Artist, make a adventure game with GRAC or use some of the professional music for your games. With a very easy to use AmigaGuide© interface with many of the programs running straight from the CD. **All programmers receive a royalty for every CD sold.**

£32.99

F1 LICENCEWARE

COMMERCIAL SOFTWARE - NOT PD!

PHANTASMAGORIA pro backgrounds and textures

Textures and backgrounds for video, ray-tracing and image work for the last five years. Their entire collection, consisting of 500+ 24Bit backgrounds and textures, is present on this CD-ROM. There are the very high quality 24Bit JPEG files for video, graphics and multimedia work and Targa's for PC raytracing. No wasted space on this CD-ROM! For instance, no multi-graphics files such as SCI, PCX or even more obscure formats that are found on other texture CD's. A superb and complete collection for Pro's and Amateurs.

COLOUR REFERENCES FOR EVERY IMAGE

brand new release £29.99

MULTIMEDIA TOOLKIT II

1000's of clipart, fonts, samples, modules and midi files. Many, many tools and utilities to improve your multimedia presentations. All the items run straight from the CD. Octamed 5.04, the full version, is included (with Aura support), support files from many Octamed experts. Over 50MBs of Midicraft midi files, samples and modules (Midicraft are professional musicians working with the Amiga to create their music). 200 MBs of Imagine and Lightwave objects. If you are a Multimedia fan then you should not miss release volume 2.

£22.99

AGA EXPERIENCE vol. 1

NFA, famous for their Bodyshop series and Word disk magazine, present their first CD for the Amiga. This contains AGA PD from the last 3 years of which 90% will run straight from the CD! Contains the best WB3+ utilities and creative software, the greatest AGA games, high quality AGA slideshows, the most outstanding AGA demos, entertaining and informative disk magazines and the best of the rest. NFA have also compiled loads of exclusive wares for the CD: slideshows, Klondike cards and more. All this and contained in superb Magic Workbench icons makes the CD an absolute pleasure to use!

DUE OUT SEPTEMBER 1ST £19.99

ASSASSINS 2

In the follow up to Assassins Games vol.1, this CD contains 600 new games for all Amiga CD users. It contains a excellent interface which means that 99% of the games run straight from the CD, even on a CD32. If you want the best and the latest games then look no further! **£18.99**

AMOS vol.2

This is an update to the first AMOS CD - the official library disks upto 638, general Amos PD over 200 disks. Also includes, ready to run, 1600 source files, 100 sprite banks, 260 Ctext banks, 800 samples, music banks, several Amos and Amos Pro extensions. An absolute essential CD for any Amos programmer. **£18.99**

HOW TO ORDER

Choose the CDs you want to order, add 75p to the complete cost to cover postage and packing. Then send your cheque or postal order to the address on the other page. You can also pay by credit/debit card.

INFORMATION

As you can see from the advert we are working with F1 Licenceware to produce their CD-Rom. We also have a range of other co-operation CDs in the pipeline. If you have an idea for a CD then contact us as soon as possible.

FRESH FONTS

Volume 1 contains 626 MBs of fonts. Deco (71 fonts), Non-Latin (31), Pictures (17), Serif (23), Sans Serif (31), Script (27). Volume 2 contains 632 MBs of fonts. Deco (63 families). Sans Serif (29), Script (36), Thienen (19) and more!

VOLUME 1 £14.99 — VOLUME 2 £16.99

LIGHT ROM

Vol 1 contains 3D objects, many example images, image sequences, scene files, surface attributes, bump maps and textures. Light Rom volume 2 contains 100% Lightwave/Toaster material with over 300MB of data that didn't appear on vol.1.

VOLUME 1 £29.99 — VOLUME 2 £34.99

ZOOM

Since the reviews in recent Amiga magazines we have taken all the minor criticisms and improved the interface to be the most easy to use CD interface on any CD. Coded by the author of the great Deadlock disk magazine - just point, read about the disk and click to extract. Superb and very easy to use. The contents have also been updated so you get all the latest PD until early September 1995 and loads more as listed opposite. Comes with an on-line help routine, multitasking search routine and hotkeys function. If you want the latest or greatest PD software then look here! The CD contains well over 1000 disks, over 600MB's of data or 1.2 GIG's of public domain.

Superb value CD-Rom at only £19.99 NEW!

Available to existing owners at £6.99 - call!

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- **New Search Routine** — the multi-tasking search/find will seek file names or number
- **New 'Hot-Keys' Function** — just press 'S' for search or 'E' for extract, 'Help' for help!
- **New Separate List Buttons** — click a button for "Utilities" or "Demos" etc etc
- **Over 125 New Disks** — updated PD from June 1st to early September 1995
- **Restyled, Remastered** — new help and information guide, restyled artwork! Superb!

- The latest PD from December '94 to September '95 : Utils, games, demos, slideshows, education, disk mags and more! - *including most of this advert and loads of great PD software*
- NEW! 100 Klondike/Card Games Deluxe Cardsets
- Ground Zero's Themed Imagine Objects
- NEW! A great selection of Active Software Pro Packs
- NEW! All the Professional Sound Samples [50 Disks]
- Over 22MB+ of Magic WB icons, backdrops, drawers etc

FRED FISH

Fred Fish has been serving the Amiga market since inception with his excellent disk compilations. The Fresh Fish (double CD) CDs continue the trend. The Gold Fish CDs are compilation of the best from the Fresh Fish CDs. The best on the market!

ALL CDs £24.99

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE Every time an Fred Fish CD is released (usually 4/6 months) we will send it to you for £21.99 - pay by credit or debit card. Card debited on despatch.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE Subscribe to Gold Fish 3 for £22.99 (Xmas 95 release?) - pay by credit or debit card. Card debited on despatch.

THE AMINET COLLECTION

Aminet 5	March 95	£11.99
Aminet 6	June 95	£11.99
Aminet 7	August 95	£13.99
Aminet 8	October 95 [Pre-Order]	£11.99
Aminet 9	December 95 [Pre-Order]	£11.99

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE Every time an Aminet CD is released (usually bi-monthly) we will send it to you for £11.99 - pay by credit or debit card. Card debited on despatch.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE Subscribe to Aminet SET vol 2 for £24.99 and we will send you it on release (Xmas 95?) - pay by credit or debit card. Card debited on despatch.

Aminet Set £23.99

MEGA BUNDLE ONE

LIGHT WORKS — PRO FONTS/CLIP — BEAUTY CHAOS

This Mega Bundle contains Light Works - a superb raytracing/3D CD by Tobias Richter, The Professional Fonts and Clipart CD from PD Soft and the Beauty of Chaos which contains loads of fractals. **GET 3 CDs for £34.99**

MEGA BUNDLE TWO

LSD VOL 2 — MEETING PEARLS 1 — PHASE 4

The 2nd Mega Bundle contains the LSD II CD - LSD were "famous" for Grapevine, Meeting Pearls 1 and the classic 17Bit Phase 4. Four Aminet-thrashers for one price! **GET 3 CDs for £24.99**

MEGA BUNDLE 3

ASSASSINS 1 — GAMERS DELIGHT — POWER GAMES

Mega Bundle 3 contains the Assassins Games CD vol 1, Gamers Delight - full of commercial games - and to complete this games compendium Power Games has been included! **GET 3 CDs for £29.99**

HOTTEST 4

This is a PD Soft collection of their PD library during 1994. Games, demos, utilities, animations, slideshows, diskmags, pictures, samples, music modules and much more. Limited stocks left so get this CD at this low price while you still can. **BARGAIN! £7.99**

SPECCY SENSATIONS 2

A multi-platform CD with emulators for Amiga, Atari ST, Mac and PC. Loads of FAQs (Speccy related), technical FAQ, games lists, modified ROM, wallpaper (.BMP) pictures for Windows and (IFF) for Amiga. Over 100 different Speccy computer screens and loads of tape covers. Not only does the CD contain all this exclusive data, it is stuffed with over 150MB's of Spectrum games for a myriad of computers. Mainly .SNA but also a selection of Z80 files. From Attic Attac to Exolon or Jet Set Willy to Arcadia. Superb! **£18.99**

3D ARENA

A superb 3D CD that contains many objects for Imagine, Lightwave and Real 3D for the Amiga and PC computers. One exclusive aspect for this CD is the 24Bit Club's objects/images for Lightwave. You'll only find them on here! Also attribute files, tutorials, utilities. **£19.99**

LIGHT WORKS

A superb compilation brought to you by Tobias J. Richter, reknown for his amazing spaceships of famous science fiction films. The objects are complex, highly detailed and seem very real due to the superb surface texture techniques used. Ideal for both experts and beginners. **£29.99**

PRO CLIPART 2

This is a multi-format CD that contains data in IFF and PCX format for Amiga and PC users. Includes categories such as animals, boys, cultural, floral and natural, girls, holiday, literal, mythological, scenery, transportation and work images. For Amiga/PC computers. **£17.99**

GFX SENSATIONS

A collection of the best graphics tools, 24Bit images, animations and a huge collection for Imagine and Lightwave users: Anatomy, animals, aviation, bathroom, botany, buildings, clocks, computers, food, kitchens, lamps, ships, space, sports and much more! **£16.99**

CD BOOT v1

This allows you to use any CD32 game on your A1200 or A4000. You can create a config file for every game. Comes with a complete English based manual and can run around 98% of CD32 games. **£26.99**

SOUNDS TERRIFIC

This CD contains over 1.2 Gigs of sound and music data. It will form part of any professional musicians library or amateurs collection. 4,600 modules, 14,000 samples, 568 Sonix scores, 4500 instruments, 302 octamed modules and more! **£17.99**

C64 SENSATIONS

CALL FOR DATE

This CD gives you almost 10000 C64 megademos and over 600MB of software. Mega demos, games, utilities for the Amiga and PC computers. Latest versions of emulators for both machines (the commercial version of A64 v3 for the Amiga). C64 experts have compiled a best of a CD. **£18.99**

THE COLOUR LIBRARY

From a graphics company in Basildon, this compact disc contains all things colour. Essentially 1700 colour files with categories such as Animals, Bikes, Boats, Buildings, Cars, Cartoons, Cats, Computers, Dinosaurs, Dogs, Fantasy, Fish, Flags, Flowers, Food, Helicopters, Houses, Insects, Maps, Medical, Military, Misc, Painting, Photo, Places, Planes, Raytrace, Scenic, Sci-Fi, Sea, Space, Sport, Star Trek, Swimsuit, Trains, Wars and Women. 100% colour! **£8.99**

AMIGA DTV

Many original textures start this CD-ROM. Backgrounds in JPEG format, 200 colour anti-aliased fonts, 3D object data for Ligtwave, Imagine and Scupit. It also contains many up-to-date utilities such as Main Actor, Ham Lab, Fracirt, Anim players and more. **£13.99**

UTILITIES 1-1500

The utilities 1-1500 CD contains the very best utilities and tools from PD Soft's library (mainly during 1994). Education, business, sound utilities, hobbies, emulators, programming, printer tools, virus killers and much more! **BARGAIN! £7.99**

GIGA GRAPHICS

Giga Graphics is the ULTIMATE collection of graphics for the AGA Amiga. Over 10,000 images on this quad-pack CD. All images are in 24 Bit and HAM 8. Superb price for 4 CD's! Suitable for all AGA Amiga owners. **£34.99**

SOUND WORKSHOP

Over 1 Gigabytes of data on this double CD. Includes MIDI files in various formats (MIDI, MIM), hundreds of MB's of music to listen to or change/edit for your own applications. Over 5000 modules, 1000 VOC files, 1000 WAV files, 1000 samples. **£17.99**

HOTTEST 5

Hottest 5 contains some of the very best games, demos, utilities, animations, slideshows and more from October to early February this year. This CD also comes with a 50-page black and white booklet and BBS support on the compact disc itself. **£15.99**

TEN ON TEN PACK

An Almathera collection, reviewed in this months magazine consisting of ten CDs. They are: Team Yankee, Pandora's CD, World Vista Atlas, Illustrated Shakespeare, CDPD1, CDPD2, Demo 1, Comms and Networking, Fonts & Clipart and Photo Library CD **£35.99**

INTERNET INFO

17,420 text documents straight from the Internet. FAQs on every subject imaginable, discussions from Usenet, Internet guides and more. An ideal way for the novice user to understand the Net! **£16.99**

HOT AMIGA DEMOS

Do you want 1072 megabytes of the very hottest Amiga demos and megademos? This CD offers you hundreds of the finest demos. Spaceballs, Kefrens, TRSI, Complex, Scoopex, Silents, Sanity and Virtual Dreams are a selection of the biggest names here. 2000 floppy disks in DMS format with menu system to download LHA and DMS files, the CD also contains loads of the latest music modules from around the world. Plenty on here to keep any user or even a demo freak going for ages! **£18.99**

ILLUSIONS IN 3D

Here is a CD with loads of 3D hidden pictures, the utilities you need to create your own images and also the objects needed to create the 3D "hidden" effect! Programs such as Stereogram to produce the image as well as hundreds of source files in a myriad of gfx formats. **£5.99**

ADULT SENSATIONS

This CD is for adults only, it contains soft porn material no worse than the Sun newspaper. If this material offends you in any way please refrain from purchasing the CD. Proof of age (18+ only) needed when buying this CD. No proof = no CD. We do not condone or supply hard core material **£17.99**

MEETING PEARLS 2

Carrying on the excellent tradition this entire CD is run from HMTL "internet" style pages. More utilities, games, tools, music and Midi, FAQ's, PasTEX files and MB's of other data. This CD is similar to the Aminet series except it could be classed as more technical. **£8.99**

WS ANIMATIONS

A double CD animation extravaganza! All the animations are ready to run from the CD, through an Amiga Guide file system. Some stunningly large animations, some over 5MB in size. Suitable for both the Amiga and PC. **£17.99**

GROLLIERS £28.99

A superb, and the very best, encyclopedia for the CD32 or any AGA Amiga computer

17BIT DIMENSION 5

Following on from Phase 4 17Bit bring you their latest PD CD release. Their disks up until August 1995.

Get this for £16.99

LSD VOL III £17.99

The latest CD brought to you from LSD. Contains 95% of PD that has never appeared on any other CD!

WS FONTS

Another popular Wierd Science compact disc. This CD contains 2000+ Adobe and CG fonts, some PS fonts, 500+ bitmap, 190 coloured, 240 IFF, 139 Pgs, 24 Prodraw, 500 Truetype, 132 PCX, 300 GDOS and more! **£7.99**

WS CLIPART

Must be nearly third in the most popular CD ever produced. Contains megabytes of B/W IFF bitmaps, colour IFF, proclips, EPS, Pagesetter, Pgs, IMG, Corel Draw and coloured brushes for Deluxe Paint. Bargain! This CD-Rom is suitable for Amiga, PC and MAC computers. **£7.99**

Better than Amiga World

I am writing to tell you how grateful I am to receive your magazine, *Amiga Computing*, in fulfilment of the remainder of my subscription to Amiga World. These have been trying days for Amiga owners in the United States, with suppliers and publishers closing shop or switching to PC-related products.

I am delighted by the depth of the articles in your magazine, as evidenced by its thickness in my mailbox. I am also quite pleased that you publish a US edition complete with US advertisers. It is good to see that there are still some loyal businesses supporting the Amiga community in the States.

I also look forward to upgrading to your Gold Subscription. I have tried your CoverDisks in the past, but newsstand prices of foreign periodicals are almost criminal here.

Please keep up the good work, it is not unappreciated here.

Robert J Bruce, Kansas USA

I'm pleased that you like our new edition of *Amiga Computing*. We are proud to offer what we consider to be the best advice on new products and old alike, with up to the minute news reporting and in-depth tutorials, and to paraphrase Al Jolson, you ain't read nuthin' yet!



Singing our praises

I must write to congratulate and thank all of you for providing a valuable and informative publication. You do justice to the Amiga by representing the qualities of the machine, notably creativity and enthusiasm. Perhaps the best compliment I can give is that you really seem to enjoy doing what you are doing.

For instance, if I take a look at your August '95 edition, in the ImageFX v2.1 review, I immediately notice that you're not saying 'ImageFX does this...' Instead, you're saying 'I am happy to use ImageFX' or 'This seems odd to me...' or 'Maybe you really ought to look at this' etc. See the difference? Of course, because that's what makes your magazine different to the PC magazines I've flicked through. They are all 'Mhz' and 'Windows X.Y.'

You get this feeling running up your spine that that's all PCs are. But when you get your hands on an Amiga, it's like 'Hey, what shall we do now – music, art? It's friendly and it's shaped by you. One of my friends owns a PC and all the time he's saying: 'What's it doing now' or 'It's run out of memory' etc.

Please keep up the good work – you provide a kind of parenthood over the Amiga users.

Finally, I would be pleased to hear any comments you might have about the future of the Amiga and that shadowy force that is Escom.

C Cousins, Warrington

I think we do enjoy what we are doing, and it's for the reasons you give. Although we all get frustrated when the Amiga crashes, it's normally because we want to carry on having fun. As for Escom, read our piece by Gareth Lofthouse on the recent press conference that took place in Heathrow.

True fans

As an avid Amiga user for eight years it is still good to see such enthusiasm from other Amiga users. After the Commodore fiasco, it's obvious the only people still reading magazines and writing software are *true* Amiga fans.

If Escom do deliver the goods as promised, then I am sure the Amiga will be back in the Spotlight. It was nice to see the new logo Escom plan to use on *our* new machines. In my opinion (even with the energetic red square) the logo does not appear bold enough.

I have subscribed to your magazine in the past, although I have bought the magazine at the local newsagent recently for two reasons.:

1. Uncertainty about Commodore and the Amiga.
2. The free gifts you have offered recently have not interested me (when are you

Amiga Computing has recently become an international publication with a US edition going out to subscribers of the now-defunct Amiga World. It seems from the amount of mail the change has proved quite popular with our American cousins.

Iberian inquiry

I've seen in the news pages of issues 88 and 89 of your magazine the incredible Zip Drive which acts like a 100Mb removable hard disk, and in the future there will be a version which will also incorporate a 3.5 inch high density drive.

My question is, where can I buy this wonderful drive? Is it only in the USA or is there a distributor here in Europe? I've seen a review of it in a US magazine which says it is the most wonderful thing ever made, but doesn't give an address where you can buy the drive. If I buy it in the US will it work in Europe?

You are the only European magazine I have seen that has said something about the Zip drive. Congratulations on informing the readers of new technologies, and will you be doing a full review of the Zip Drive?

Yours is the only Amiga magazine that has given a CD free that is full of interesting things, and I think it's the first to publish something about the new Personal Paint 6.3. Not only that, you also had an offer to buy it on a floppy or CD-ROM version.

I hope you don't raise your price as other magazines have done as I don't buy these any more – and it's not just me, they have lost thousands of readers because we are not as rich as they think we are.

C R Redrado, Menorca

Òla señor Redrado! Check out this month's issue for a full review of the super Zip. I'm glad you liked the Personal Paint feature and the CD we gave away on May's issue. As for our cover price, we are always at the mercy of the cost of the paper we print on, but we have managed to hold our price down this far, and hope to continue to hold it down. Besides which, I really hope you don't just buy our magazine because it is cheap, but rather that it is the best.

Does anyone care?

I am a new subscriber, formerly an Amiga World sub. I have just received my first issue of your magazine and am very impressed with the look and content. My question is one that I am sure is shared by many other readers both here and on your side of the ocean.

I am an A3000 owner, with 10Mb RAM, a 24-bit EGS spectrum board, etc. On reading your magazine I felt both lost and confused. Where do we A3000 folks fit in with the state of the Amiga? I originally bought my EGS to tap into the power of 24-bit graphics, only to discover that all new games for the A4000 won't even work with my machine. Most Amiga magazines now seem to feature CoverDisks, but even if I paid the extra price for these mags, I couldn't use the programs on the disks. Will I ever be able to run CD32 games or any of the AGA games?

And what about PC/Mac compatibility? If I purchase an Emplant, will my EGS be able to run the 256 colour games and programs available for the PC? And will a PowerPC board be available for the A3000? How much would it cost? Would it be more economical?

Like many others, I don't have the money to simply trash my computer and buy a new A4000T, or even an A1200. I have a large investment in my current equipment and would appreciate an honest answer or speculation on how bad off A3000 owners really are.

As you cover the new and exciting developments for the new Escom Amiga, please remember that there are a lot of us out here using A3000s who would like to know where we stand. We are confused and worried. We would appreciate any information you could give us, as well as clarification in your reviews and articles as to what will and won't run on our machines.

Thank you for your excellent magazine and I look forward to receiving it every month.

B Nicholson, Lake Buena Vista, USA

Well now, Mr Nicholson, don't fret. Quite a few of the staff of Amiga Computing are also A3000 owners and we don't look worried. Sure, you'll never be able to play AGA games, but is that really all you bought your graphics card for? Yes, you can buy an Emplant and run 256 colour Mac games on it, I do (get Maelstrom, by the way), but PC bridgeboards are a little thin on the ground at the moment.

If you are currently still using Workbench 2.x, which I assume you are because you say that you can't run 256 colour programs on your machine, then the best thing you can do is to immediately upgrade to Workbench 3.1 as this will let you run a 256 colour Workbench on your machine.

Finally, on a personal note, I think that the A3000 and A3000T were the best machines Commodore ever designed and they have a lot of advantages over A4000s, including a built-in SCSI controller and more importantly, a flicker fixer so you can use your Amiga with any old VGA monitor and not have to worry about not being able to sync down to 15kHz.

going to change them?)

Needless to say, I will probably subscribe soon enough.

M Clatworthy, Herstmonceux

It might be seen as a shame that it is only true Amiga fans who are left to produce software and hardware for us. We really need to have big companies seeing us as a valid platform for development in order to bring our machine back to prominence. All the same, we are getting some great stuff at the moment. Look at Photogenics, Twist, DOpus 5, etc.

As for the new Escom logo, you can always send us what you think would be more appropriate. If we get enough entries we might have a competition to see which one we think is best.

letters please

Keep those letters coming! If you can't be bothered to find a bit of paper and a stamp, why not e-mail us? Simply point your mailer to: ESP@acomp.demon.co.uk There's a £50 pound prize for the best letter printed as an incentive

Quality products

I read with interest about the CD-ROM that Colchester Zoo are employing and would be very interested in buying such a quality CD. Imagine how popular the Amiga range of computers will become with products such as these – parents will not need to take a second mortgage to provide quality edutainment for their children.

Now that CD drives are available to the mass market, courtesy of Squirrel, I hope more products of this nature will become available. This is what the Amiga needs to be taken seriously in the realm of multimedia. I also have a demo of Insight: Living Body by Optonica, and trust that this product is still due for release.

I also hope that once the A1200, 4000 and CD32s come back into production, these companies will make AGA CDs the standard. Without this commitment, the Amiga will always be held back. Non-AGA graphics do not carry the same impact and quality, and our titles will always pale in comparison to those on the PC. Commodore, and Escom (?), dropped the non-AGA machines for good reason – this is the 1990s.

This leads onto another point – with the vast majority of Amiga users who are unwilling to update their machines, we will never see software that can match the likes of Word or Word Perfect. Our computers will never be powerful enough. And if, for instance, Word did appear on the Amiga, how many people would buy it?

For that price you could buy yourself a second-hand A1200 with a copy of Wordworth 2. I only hope that the Amiga market will develop and that its users take note, so I can continue to use and support my favourite machine without settling for second best.

R Morse, Milton Keynes

There has been no decision made on whether the Colchester Zoo CD will become a commercial product yet. Ben Vost, the author of the piece, says he hopes it does because it is really informative and fun to use. The Squirrel SCSI controller has indeed been a phenomenal success, with HiSoft selling them as fast as they can produce them.

Put this together with the fact that the survey we conducted at the end of last year showed that most people were interested in buying a CD-ROM drive, and you have a convincing argument for more developers to produce quality titles like the Colchester Zoo one.

But it doesn't just have to be limited to edutainment titles either – it would be really nice to see some original CD-based games that don't rely on CD32 emulation, but that ran from Workbench or a CD32. Any offers?

Hard drive worries

I've just bought a second-hand A1200 with hard drive, PSU, mouse, manual, and disks complete, except for the Hard disk install disk version 3.0 and the Amiga Hard Drive Users guide.

All that was otherwise wrong was that the keymap was set to American, resulting in the wrong characters being produced by the English keyboard.

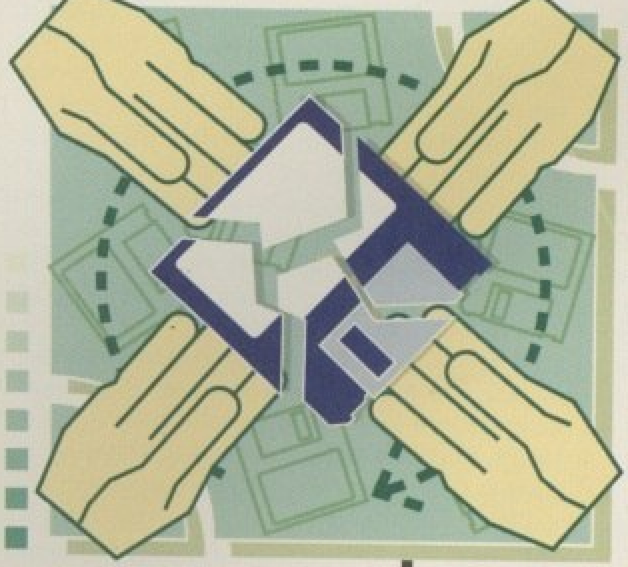
Could you please tell me where I might buy the above disk and manual.

D R Bartnell, London

I take it from your letter that the hard drive was fitted by a third party, rather than bought with one when it was new. Unfortunately, this was always the only way you could actually get hold of the official Commodore hard drive installation disk and manual, whether that situation has now changed with Amiga Technologies remains to be seen. You could try contacting them on 01628 770036.

Alternatively, should you have no luck with that avenue of enquiry, you can try any of the numerous PD libraries whose adverts grace our pages and ask them if they have a public domain or shareware equivalent of the Commodore installer. You will quite likely be offered RDPrep which is excellent, although it doesn't actually come with a manual.

public sector



Dave Cusick plunges an appendage into the PD pile and plucks out a plethora of premier products

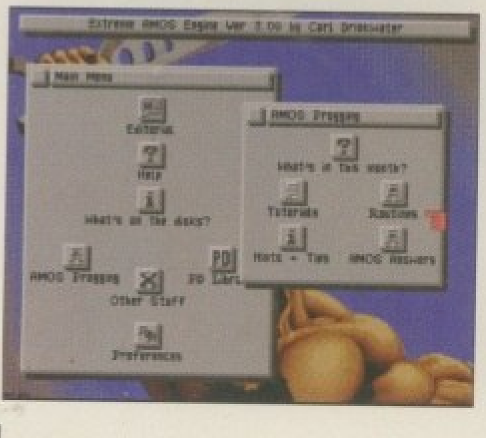
Autumn marches ever onward, and before we know it Christmas will once again be upon us. It's over a year now since I took over the reigns of Public Sector and that time has seen many changes, not least of them being Escom's purchase of the Amiga. But some things never change. The quality of my alliterative standfirsts is, for example, as feeble as ever, and the quality of the PD and shareware *Amiga Computing* receives has remained consistently high...

Extreme Amos #1

Produced by: Carl Drinkwater
Available from: PD libraries

It's not often that the first issue of a diskmag makes a really good impression. This is particularly so in the case of those concerning Amos programming as the vast majority tend to be disappointing, insubstantial products.

Understandably, since this is the first issue, the content of some of the articles is a little thin. This is forgivable though, because at least the topics covered are more adventurous and interesting than in some disk magazines I have encountered. Tutorials, news, source code and so on make up the bulk of the magazine, and Extreme Amos also makes no secret of its close links with Mushroom PD, which claims to be the second largest Amos-only PD library in the country. Extreme Amos also distinguishes itself because it employs a stylish Workbench-like interface for article selection which makes a welcome change to the usual scrolling text-based lists.



Extreme Amos boasts a more innovative interface than most disk magazines



Piles O' Tiles... one of two excellent Amos programs included on Extreme Amos

As an added bonus, the second of the two disks on which Extreme Amos comes contains two excellent programs which demonstrate effectively what Amos is capable of in the hands of good authors. The first of these, Paul Burkey's Piles O' Tiles, is an enjoyable Shanghai-style game in which the objective is to remove pairs of 'Free' tiles – those which are not surrounded by tile stacks of equal heights. In the mould of numerous great puzzle games, it is simple but enormously engaging.

The second program is a magic eye picture creator called TERDS (standing for Totally Excellent Random Dot Stereograms). Written by magazine producer Carl Drinkwater, this is one of the better programs of its type, offering various options for twiddling with the RDS creation process.

Both TERDS and Piles O' Tiles are decent titles in their own right, but combined with the first issue of a promising new diskmag they become even more attractive. This is a package worth investigating.

MUSIC of the month

Surfing On The Jazz Wave

Produced by: The Grooving Brothers
Available from: 17 Bit Software
Disk No. 3828 A/B

'What you gonna do when there ain't no swing?' asks the title screen of this curious production. Speaking personally I'll probably throw a party, but for those rather more favourably inclined towards it this disk could prove quite interesting.

Essentially, Surfing On A Jazz Wave is an immaculately presented collection of acid jazz tunes, all beautifully sampled and arranged. This sort of music doesn't do much for me, but if this is your thing then you'll love this disk – and even if it's not you will at least be stunned by the top class graphics and crisp sound reproduction.

As an added bonus, there's also an attempt to categorise a few dozen artists and their recordings, labelling them Dance, Funk, Acid Jazz, Salsa, Indefinable, or whatever. And at least the programmers realised that a well-crafted music module benefits from the non-inclusion of spinning texture-mapped balls and spiralling pictures of top super-models.

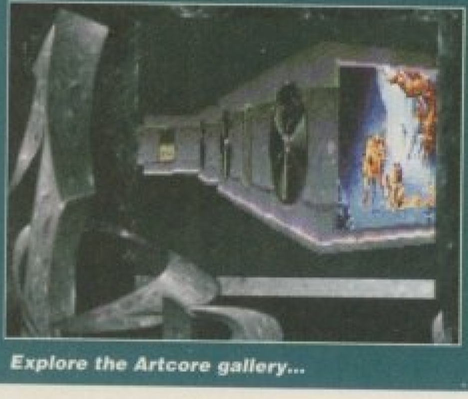
Artcore

Produced by: Scoopex
Available from: Pixel Digital PD
Disk No. AG249

Artcore is a slideshow with a difference. Whereas ordinary slideshows present the viewer with a series of pictures, one after another, with some awful tune wibbling away in the background, Artcore allows you to explore a texture-mapped 3D dungeon-style 'gallery'... with some awful tune wibbling away in the background.

It's surprising how much such a simple idea adds to the interest. Admittedly, as a consequence of including this kind of 'game engine' on the disk, only a dozen or so pictures can be included. But in this age where the prefix 'Virtual' is often happily slapped onto computer versions of real-life experiences and held up as examples of advancing technology, it is perhaps fitting that the common computer slideshow should be overhauled in this manner.

What about the pictures though?



Explore the Artcore gallery...





Scores of artists and recordings categorised for your listening pleasure

Come as you are

I want to hear from you if you have any program, whatever its purpose, which you consider worthy of review. Whether it will be freely distributable public domain, shareware or licenceware, if you feel it's of sufficient quality to merit coverage then stick it in a jiffy bag or padded envelope and send it in with all haste. I promise I'll at least look at your work – even if it's yet another Lottery program or Klondike cardset. It does make my job a lot easier though if disks are clearly labelled. Please also include a cover letter detailing the disk contents and price and giving some basic instructions. The magic address is:

Dave Cusick
PD submissions
Amiga Computing
Media House
Adlington Park
Macclesfield SK10 4NP

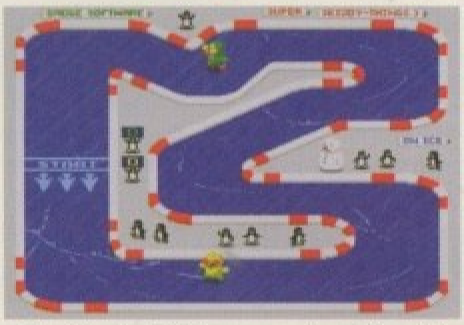
Super Skiddy Things 3 On Ice

Programmed by: Simon Hitchen
Available from: PD Libraries

This amusing little two-player racing game is just the thing for those lengthening Autumn evenings. The aim is to guide your rubber-suited Penguin around one of the four tracks before your opponent does. The thing is, since the tracks are constructed on ice, there tends to be a fair bit of skidding around, making this a slightly trickier exercise than might be imagined... especially when the track slipperiness setting is adjusted for minimum grip.



The title screen includes a basic ping-pong game... fifteen years ago this sort of thing on a Grandstand Video Game System would have been all the rage



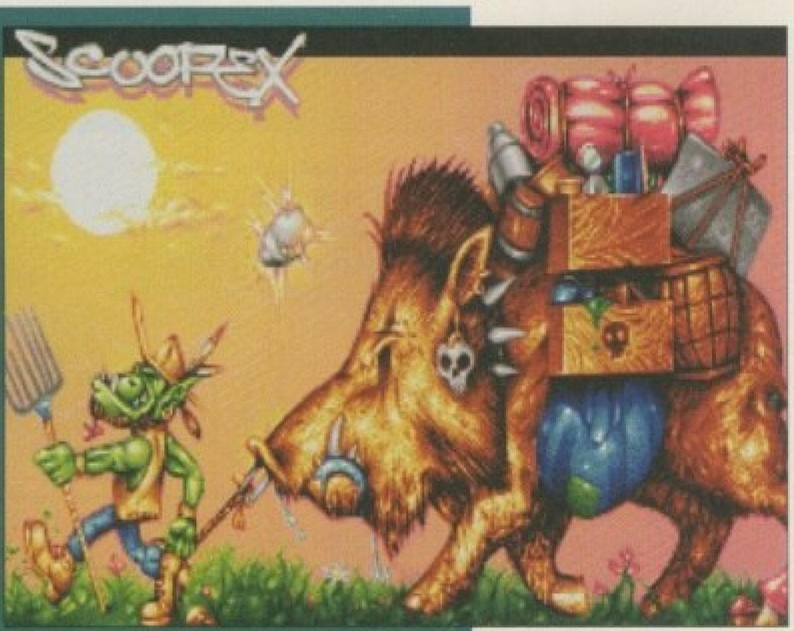
Owing more than a little to Skidmarks, Super Skiddy Things 3 in all its graphical splendour

Top graphics and decent sound definitely help, but as ever it's the playability which makes or breaks a game. Super Skiddy Things 3 is not only very good fun, but it's the sort of game you and a friend could end up playing for quite some time.

Admittedly it does not demand a great deal of brainpower, but this is, if anything, in the game's favour. And in the unlikely event of one of you becoming bored with skidding around the tracks at high speed, the title screen also features a simple ping-pong game.

Well, admittedly if they were in a conventional slideshow they wouldn't grab the attention particularly. The fantasy images are all pretty typical: a couple of monstrous entities and the obligatory naked women in bizarre and highly unlikely poses. The standard of artwork throughout is high but imagination is a little lacking in some cases.

It's slightly ironic really that what is first and foremost a slideshow should impress largely because it clones the often-imitated PC blastfest Doom, albeit, of course, without the violence. But it's a nice idea, and one I'd like to see attempted again in the near future – and given the stunning lack of originality displayed in the demo scene sometimes, I think it's highly likely that I will.

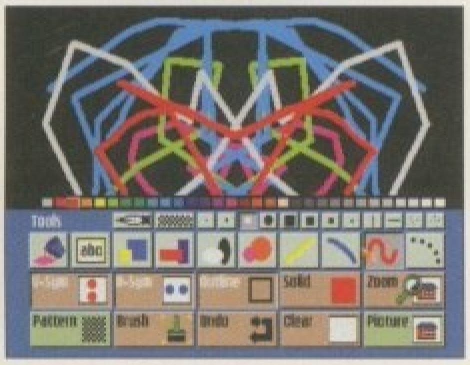


...and then stare at the pictures for hours on end

Belle's Paint

Programmed by: Philip Drake
Available from: SaddleTramps PD
Disk No. A115

A charming paint package written in Amos Professional and boasting a decent selection of tools. In addition to the compulsory line and shape tools, it is possible to turn on lines of vertical and horizontal reflection symmetry, zoom in to work in detail on tricky areas, and fill in areas with preset patterns. At the click of a button the screen can also be flipped either horizontally or vertically.



All the tools you would expect are to be found in the Belle's Paint toolbox

While it's scarcely a rival for Personal Paint or Brilliance, or even DPaint, Belle's Paint is a competent piece of programming which costs a fraction of the price of commercial alternatives. It's also got some nice touches. For instance, with a little bit of effort it is apparently possible to use the program to perform some video titling functions such as fancy wipes.

However the only documents provided are some very brief ones added by those nice people at SaddleTramps, so a degree of experimentation could be necessary to familiarise yourself with this facility. I must confess, I couldn't entirely

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Scavenger

Programmed by: Ben Wright
Available from: Ben Wright

Old game ideas are constantly being resurrected in the world of PD and shareware, which is not necessarily a bad thing because many golden oldies were a good deal more entertaining than some recent commercial offerings. Scavenger is essentially Asteroids, with the slight difference that to finish a level in this version the player must collect a certain number of gems, rather than just blow away every asteroid on the screen.

However, I don't think I've ever played such a difficult Asteroids clone. Scavenger is so tough that even with the maximum possible nine lives I struggled to stay alive for more than a minute or two.

The strange thing is that despite being almost impossibly tricky due to what might kindly be described as quite sensitive controls, Scavenger is very addictive. There is also the added advantage that you're not likely to finish the game in a hurry.

Yes, the first time you play it you'll be lucky to last three seconds before colliding with a giant floating chunk of rock. But that won't stop you coming back for more.

The graphics and sound are reasonable enough, although they are certainly nothing to get excited about. The gameplay is a different kettle of fish altogether though, because arcade action fans will want to have this game's babies.



Scavenger is a tough Asteroids clone that's even harder on accelerated Amigas

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get to grips with the process in the limited time available, but I'm sure others will.

If you fancy trying your hand at producing some titling effects or are just on the look out for a no-frills paint package, Belle's Paint is definitely worth checking out.

RemDate 2

Programmed by: Andrew Whiteley
Available from: Roberta Smith DTP
Disk No. BU169

If you're one of those people who always forgets important dates such as birthdays and anniversaries, then RemDate is the program for you. It stores these along with special days, diary appointments, addresses and telephone numbers, making this one of the most comprehensive personal organiser programs in the public domain. It can print out in a variety of ways, including paper of sizes suitable for use in pocket personal organisers.

On demand, RemDate will summarise events in the next few days and inform you how many days are left before a certain day such as a birthday, allowing you to plan accordingly. When entering these dates in the first place, it is possible to specify how much warning you want, so you'll have no excuse for being late with that anniversary card.

RemDate is also capable of displaying key events that happened 'On this day in history', or in a specified year, and producing a quote for the day.

There's a small program included called RemDateWB which is designed to sit in your Workbench Startup drawer. Then, when you turn on your machine it will remind you of any events coming up. RemDateWB can also be configured so that it only does this once a day, rather than every time you reboot, which was a thoughtful inclusion by the author.

The interface is attractive and the program is a joy to use. In short, if your life is in need of some organisation then RemDate will be the answer to your prayers.

Find the answer within

17 Bit Software
1st Floor Offices, 2/8 Market Street,
Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 1DH
Tel: 01924 366982
Fax: 01924 200943
Cost: £1 per disk plus 50p P&P

OnLine PD,
1 The Cloisters, Halsall Lane, Formby,
Liverpool L37 3PX
Tel: 01704 834335
Cost: 75p per disk plus 75p P&P

Pixel Digital PD
Stanley Dock Market, Regent Road,
Liverpool S4
Tel: 0151-259 4017
E-mail: Paul@Pixel.u-net.com
Cost: £1 per disk plus 50p P&P

Michael Pratt
10 Rivers Road, Yeovil, Somerset
BA21 5RJ
Cost: £1

Ali Prior,
10 Lovell Park Heights, Leeds LS7 1DP
Cost: Demo version free, send disk
and SAE

SaddleTramps PD
1 Lower Mill Close, Goldthorpe,
Rotherham S63 9BY
Tel: 01709 888127
Cost: 95p per disk

Roberta Smith DTP
190 Falloden Way, Hampstead Garden
Suburb, London NW11 6JE
Tel: 0181-455 1626
Cost: 95p per disk plus 50p P&P

Ben Wright
65 South Road, Portishead, Bristol
BS20 9DY
Cost: £2, although fans should also
pay registration fee later

Strange currencies

For practically a year now since the launch of the National Lottery last November, there has never been a week go by without at least one Lottery program arriving in the Public Sector mailbag. It must be said that the majority are much of a muchness, and even in the more outstanding cases it is very hard to tell whether these programs will improve your chances of winning. There have been plenty of random number selectors and even a lottery simulator. One gentleman this month sent in the interesting Talk A Lottery, designed to literally tell you some random numbers, which was at least something slightly different – but unfortunately it stubbornly refused to run for me, making it rather hard to try out.

Still, if you fancy getting hold of a proper predictor, whether out of curiosity or because the Lottery has become so important to you that you've nothing better to do of an evening than consider endless multi-ticket permutations, then here's the Public Sector guide to the three to beat...

Pro Lottery 1.1

(Originally reviewed in AC89)
Available from: Ali Prior

The program I think I'd opt for if I ever bothered doing the Lottery. This was the first predictor *Amiga Computing* received which suggests multi-ticket permutations, making it very useful to members of Lottery syndicates.

Lottery Winner AGA

(Originally reviewed in AC84)
Available from: OnLine PD (Disk No. OX101)

This is a demonstration version, with the full version costing £2.50 from the author. Prediction methods based on recognising trends in winning numbers.

MP Lottery 4.1

(Originally reviewed in AC85)
Available from: Michael Pratt

Attractively presented program, with the added advantage of costing only a quid, exactly the same price as a Lottery ticket.

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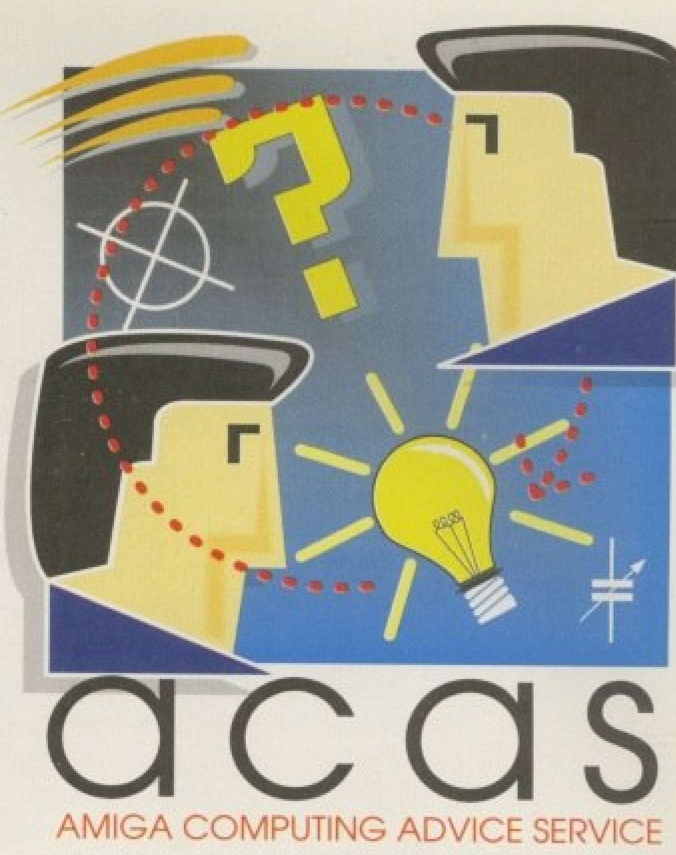
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Sit back, relax, put your feet up, have a long cool drink. Another bunch of Amiga owners receive enlightenment



CD Scala turmoil

I have an A1200 with 85Mb hard drive, and a GVP A1230 II with 4Mb of RAM. I have recently purchased an Archos CD-ROM drive, and the problem is after I install the CD software. Whenever I try to run any Scala script, big or small, the screen goes blank and a requester comes up stating that the machine is out of memory.

Currently, the only way I can use the CD-ROM is by booting up the computer with the supplied software, which does not solve the problem. Do I need more RAM for my system, or am I only going to be able to use Scala and the CD separately?

Kurt Dallas, Middlesex

The Archos CD handler software is not that brilliant, and it does seem to be the cause of your problems. It may be worth getting hold of the latest version of the handler software, which is up to about version 11, and that may solve your problems.

Another way around your problem is there should be a CD0 DOS Driver in your 'DEVS:DosDrivers' drawer. If you move this out of the DOS Drivers drawer, the CD handler software won't be started each time you boot up your machine. This will let you use Scala in peace, and then whenever you wish to use the CD, simply double-click the CD0 icon and the CD software will be started.

A600 expansion

I have a 2Mb Amiga600 and am planning to add an IDE hard drive and possibly a CD-ROM via the PCMCIA slot. I'm getting into DTP and want to add some extra memory, but the only way seems to be to use either a 2 or 4Mb PCMCIA memory card, which have seemingly disappeared from the current Amiga adverts. Is there any other way of expanding the A600's memory further?

M Toms, Isle of Wight

The A600 really is the machine that Commodore forgot, and it is quite difficult finding any adverts selling products for it. The PCMCIA cards that used to be advertised were fairly expensive, and they slowed the A1200 down so they never really took off. The other downer is that it would tie up your PCMCIA slot. If you plump for a PCMCIA card, you could try looking in a PC (spit spit) magazine, if none of the Amiga dealers can help.

I do remember a A600 card that could take either 2 or 4Mb of memory, so it was possible to expand your A600 up to 9Mb in conjunction with a PCMCIA (I hate that acronym) card. The problem you are going to have is that DTP really requires a fast processor. You do not say what DTP software you have, but on our February '94 issue we gave away 'The Publisher' which is an excellent DTP package and its main advantage is that it is extremely fast.

If you really do fancy getting serious about DTP, you might want to consider getting a second-hand A1200 fitted with a hard drive and an accelerator.

Game gremlins

I bought an A500 back in 1990 to which I have added a ½ Mb memory expansion card, a 40Mb hard drive with 4Mb of RAM. The problem I am having is that I have installed Civilization and Lemmings 2 onto my hard drive, but when I try to run them they both crash the machine, complaining about not enough memory. Am I doing something wrong or do I need some more hardware? Is there a solution that will not cost an arm and a leg?

Steve Mellows, Cambridge

It sounds to me like you do not have enough chip memory. This is the memory used to store the graphics and sounds used by the games. The A500 you have probably only has a ½ Mb of chip memory, and as you are running the games off the hard drive the amount of available chip memory is reduced, so it cannot get the required memory to run.

One option is that you could fit a mega chip expansion board which would give you 2Mb of chip memory – very handy for using paint packages, but it does cost a £150. The other alternative is if you have a revision 6 mother board. You can perform a little surgery on it which will give you 1Mb of chip memory. However, we take no responsibility for any damage caused to your machine as a result of performing this operation, and suggest that you get an authorised engineer to do the modification for you.

After you have checked that you have a revision 6 mother board – it says on the far right – you should locate three small square solder pads labelled JP2, just left of the central square chip. You need to cut the connection between the bottom two squares – a craft knife is best – and you do not have to cut very deeply at all as the solder join is on the surface and is quite thin. You then have to

➤

TUDE trouble

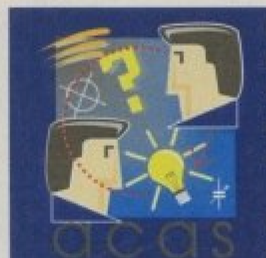
I cannot get TUDE to work. What's going on?

Lots of People, everywhere

Whoops, looks like he hit the tree. Did you extract TUDE off our September CoverDisk? If you double-clicked the GUI icon then tried to use your selected options, all that happened is that you got an error message.

We made a bit of a boob there, but do not worry as the problem is quite easy to correct. The TUDE GUI program is separate from the actual TUDE program, which can only be used from the shell. When you tell the GUI program to run TUDE, it cannot find it as it only looks at the set path, which does not include the directory TUDE is in.

What you have to do is first boot up the first disk and extract the TUDE program into ram:. Next, open up the RAM disk and from the Workbench menu select the 'show all files' option. You should now see a C drawer and the TUDE drawer. Open up the TUDE drawer and find the TUDE program. Now you have to drag TUDE into the Ram:C drawer. If you now run the GUI program it will be able to find the actual TUDE program and every thing should work fine.



Do you have a problem? Do you sometimes find yourself poised over your Amiga with axe in hand, spouting profanity at the stubborn refusal of your software or hardware to behave properly? Well, calm down and swap the axe for pen and paper, jot down your problems, along with a description of your Amiga setup, and send it off to Amiga Computing Advice Service, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Alternatively, e-mail us at ACAS@acomp.demon.co.uk

Any questions?

➤ solder a connection between the top and the middle solder pads.

Finally, you need to locate another three small solder pads labelled JP7a, found next to the RAM expansion. The connection between the bottom two needs to be cut. Once done, the bomb is defused – whoops getting a bit carried away there. If you now boot up your computer you will have a full Megabyte of graphics memory.

CD conundrums

I recently purchased an Octagon 2008 controller and a Apple CD300e and am having a great deal of trouble trying to configure the system and get it to work.

I was told to extract the CD0 driver from the storage disk, but this does not exist – the only drivers I have are Aux, Pipe, PC0 and PC1. When I use the Octagon HD inst tools, the window comes up with the following:

PIC	TID	LUN
0 0	0	Matshita CDRom CR8004 1.1f Unsupported
- -	-	
6		All Repeated

I hope you can help me out as I am getting extremely frustrated.

Alex Currie, Ayrshire

The problem you are having is that you do not have the correct DOS Driver. As someone has kindly pointed out, you will need to copy the CD0 DOS driver into your DEVS:DosDriver drawer. Unfortunately, only AmigaDOS 3.1 came with CD-ROM support, so only 3.1 owners will have a CDRom.handler and accompanying CD0 DOS driver in their L: and DEVS:DosDrivers drawers.

However, all is not lost. What you need to get hold of is the AmiCDRom software. This will install the correct driver and handler software to allow you to use your CD player. This is available on Fred Fish disks, so any decent PD house should be able to supply you with the right disk.

The information displayed by the Install tools shows that the CD is connected to the SCSI chain. You may still have problems using the CD as it stands because the CD data is repeated for every SCSI device entry. This can be cured by fitting a SCSI terminator, which basically indicates that there are no more devices attached to the SCSI chain.

AmigaGuide guide

When I am writing AmigaGuide documents, how do I get my buttons to be in Bold, italics etc. I can do it with text, but not the buttons. Also, how do you get AmigaGuide to launch external applications such as pictures, animations from within a document?

Ben Chapman, Bramhall

Blimey, it could take pages to go into the design and usage of AmigaGuides. Hang on – Paul I've just had an idea for a feature.

As far as I can tell, there is no way of getting the button in an AmigaGuide to be rendered in any other style. It ignores the built-in style commands, and also ignores any ANSI escape codes you might try.

If you are using AmigaGuide under OS3.0 or higher, it is possible to do a link to an external data file. If the data type is supported, the AmigaGuide will be able to display or play the file. The link takes the form of a normal NODE link, but the second part is the path name of the data file. For example:

```
@{'It's a Picture' link 'Work:Guide/MyPicture'}
```

Using this technique, it is also possible to do links to other guides, which are saved as separate files. The only problem with using the guide to display or play picture and sound files is that it will be on a blank window, which does not look that nice.

It is possible to execute system commands from button presses. The format is the same as above, but you use the word 'system' instead of 'link', and you have to add a '/main' to the end of the file name – don't ask me why you just have to:

```
@{'Picture' system 'run MultiView
Work:Picture/MyPicture/main'}
```

This will allow you to display a picture using another AmigaGuide or MultiView on the same screen, but in a separate window – which I think looks better. It also allows the user to get rid of the picture whenever they like.

Printer predicament

I am writing to you for help with an AmigaDOS problem that I have. On my old A600HD with WB2.05, I used to be able to dump ASCII text or directory listings to the printer from the CLI, with the following command line: type s:test TO PRT: or list s: TO PRT:.

Now that I have upgraded my machine to an A1200HD, the above command line will crash my machine, and sometimes a prompt will appear which will ask for a volume with no name.

The hard drive I have is a 120Meg Seagate – it was in my A600 but I re-installed it in the A1200. The boot partition did originally have WB2.05 on it. All other aspects of printing are fine, and I currently get around the problem by making a temporary file in RAM and using ppmore to print out the file, which works fine. Most of my executable library and device files are imploded with imploder, and I use early Explode patch to allow programs to use them.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on an excellent magazine, and also your 'Utility Heaven' CoverDisk was BRILL. It's great to see lots of useful PD programs on your Cover Disk, so keep up the good work!!!

Adrian Richings, Gwynedd

We are always susceptible to grotesque amounts of praise – glad you like the magazine so much.

As for your problem, I would firstly check that you have fully installed all the new Workbench 3.0 files over the old 2.05 files. Having said that though, using an older version of the parallel or printer device should not make the computer crash.

I am going to have to point my finger at early Explode. As it is quite an old patch, there is a chance that the new OS is doing something it cannot handle. I would unImplode all your device and libraries files because the amount of room you gain is not that great, and all you are doing is slowing the computer down because each time it opens a library or device file it is having to decompress it, increasing the amount of time it takes to run programs.

If you really want to compress your system files you might want to consider the XPK distribution, which is usable for any data files, or the Disk Expander product.

Picasso II RTG



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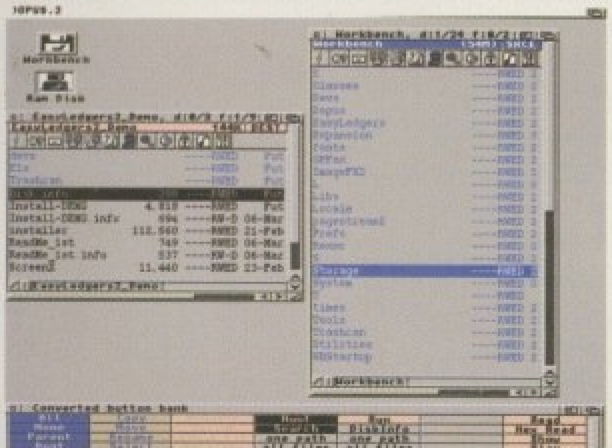
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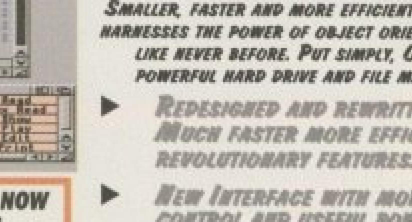
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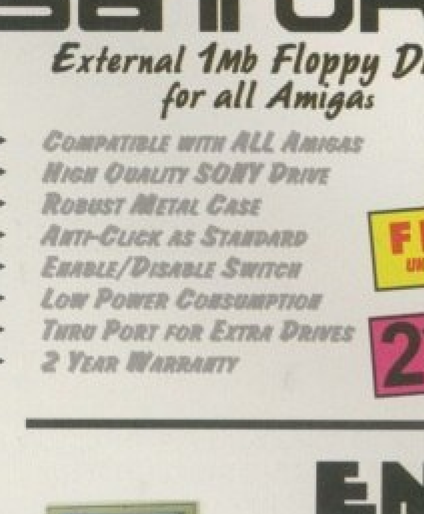
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Text message display



Part 15

Paul Overaa outlines an easy way to get text messages written to a Shell window

Assembly language programmers frequently need to be able to write text messages back to a Shell window. The good news at this point is that it is very easy to do and by making use of a few well chosen macros, you can effectively get the assembler to write most of the code for you. This month's example is based on three macros: WRITEDOS, which sets up a DOS library Write() function call, and CALLSYS and LINKLIB which (as regular readers will already know) are used to generate the library calling code.

A description of the Write() function has been provided in the accompanying boxout and you see that for delivering text messages, this function needs to know the length of the text string. One way to work out the number of characters is to actually count them, but this approach is both tedious and error prone. A better way is to get the assembler to do the counting for you by placing an additional label at the end of the text, and then using the EQUate directive to set it to a value based on the current assembler location counter value minus the start of the original string like this:

```
message            dc.b 'Just some example
text!'
message_SIZEOF     EQU *-message
```

The result is that the assembler sets the second label to the size of the preceding text string. Now, if we also adopt a convention whereby the sizes of all strings are represented by adding _SIZEOF to the original label, it's possible to create a macro that automatically forms the size label from the string name it is given. The WRITEDOS macro, shown in listing 1, does exactly this and it therefore allows a programmer to create text display code simply by writing statements like:

```
WRITEDOS          message,_stdout
```

Notice at this point that we need to identify the standard output handle for the Shell. There is an easy-to-use DOS function called Output() which allows us to obtain this. The function needs no parameters and since the result comes back in register d0, the fragment for identifying the handles looks like this:

```
CALLSYS         Output,_DOSBase
move.l          d0,_stdout
```

UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE

Those of you who are new to assembler coding may find it useful to know what the assembler does as it encounters the WRITEDOS macro call. Firstly, the macro gets expanded to produce these instructions:

```
movem.l     d1-d3,-(sp)          preserve regis
                                 ters d1-d3
move.l      _stdout,d1           DOS output file
                                 handle
move.l      #message,d2          start of mes
                                 sage
move.l      #message_SIZEOF,d3   size of message
CALLSYS     Write,_DOSBase       DOS call to
                                 write message
movem.l     (sp)+,d1-d3          restore regis
                                 ters d1-d3
```

```
Function Name:      Write()
Description:        Write data to a file
Call Format:        length_written = Write(file, buffer_p, data_length)
Registers:          D0               D1          D2          D3
Arguments:          file        - file handle
                    buffer_p    - pointer to buffer holding the data
                    data_length - length of the data
Return Value:       length_written - number of bytes actually written

Notes:              A length_written value of -1 will indicate an error
```

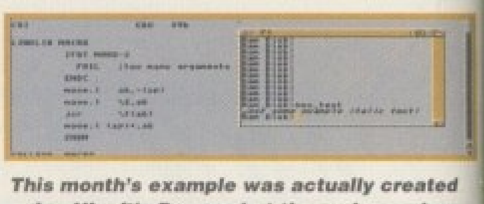
Description of the Write function

```
WRITEDOS MACRO
movem.l       d1-d3,-(sp)        preserve registers d1-d3
move.l        \2,d1              DOS output file handle
move.l        #\1,d2             start of message
move.l        #\1_SIZEOF,d3      size of message
CALLSYS       Write,_DOSBase     DOS call to write message
movem.l       (sp)+,d1-d3        restore registers d1-d3
```

Listing 1: The macro for writing text strings

The CALLSYS macro also gets expanded, causing the _LVO prefix to be added to the 'Write' label and generating a further reference to the system include file LINKLIB macro which is then also expanded. The result is that the assembler ends up producing code which looks like this:

```
movem.l   d1-d3,-(sp)          preserve registers
                               d1-d3
move.l    _stdout,d1           DOS output file
                               handle
move.l    #message,d2          start of message
move.l    #message_SIZEOF,d3   size of message
move.l    a6, -(sp)            preserve contents
                               of a6
move.l    _DOSBase, a6         base address of
                               library
jsr       _LVOWrite(a6)        indirect subroutine
                               call
move.l    (sp)+,a6             restore a6
movem.l   (sp)+,d1-d3          restore registers
                               d1-d3
```



This month's example was actually created using Hisoft's Devpac but the code can be assembled using any assembler

The CoverDisk code

All we need now is a runable example and you'll find this on the CoverDisk. Of course, WRITEDOS can be used for control character output as well as text string output so, to make the example a little more interesting, I've included a couple of console control sequences which tell the Shell window to turn italic text display on and off. The data for these calls are set up in just the same way as already explained, with italic control being provided by these two definitions:

```
italic_ondc.b CSI,$33,$6d
italic_on_SIZEOF      EQU *-italic_on
italic_off            dc.b CSI,$32,$33,$6d
italic_off_SIZEOF     EQU *-italic_off
```

You'll therefore find the real text message generation sandwiched between the calls that control the italics setting like this:

```
WRITEDOS italic_on,_stdout        turn on italics
WRITEDOS message,_stdout          get DOS to write message
WRITEDOS italic_off,_stdout       turn off italics
```

And that's basically all there is to it as far as basic Shell window text display is concerned. So that the example code can be assembled without the official Amiga system files, I've included all necessary LVO (library vector offset) values for the function calls and the WRITEDOS, CALLSYS and LINKLIB macros in the source itself. The runable form of the program does, of course, need to be run from a Shell window because it will be to that window that the output text will be sent!

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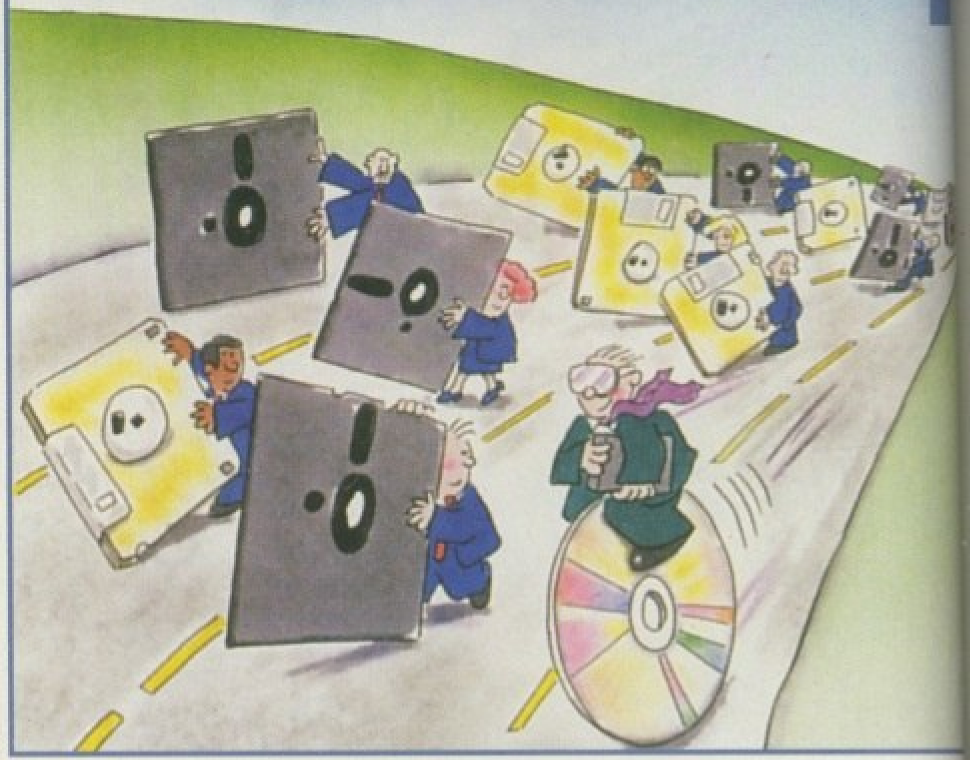
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Seriously

The Amiga has been around for quite a while now and when it was released it only had two pieces of software other than Workbench, one of which was a paint package called Prism, the other a piece of music software that Debbie Harry sang along to at the launch of the Amiga.

The situation has changed somewhat over the last ten years, with a particular concentration in the arenas the Amiga started with, namely graphics and music. And of course, there's a lot of software out there that might not be familiar to you, especially if you are a relatively new Amiga owner. So let's plunge straight into our categories and have a look at what's available.



Graphical glory

Let's start with the category that launched the Amiga – graphics. With a wide selection of paint packages at our disposal, we have always been well catered for. We've got the Paints (D, P and TV) and Brilliance, and we've got the know-how to use them. For a long time, the only choice that had to be made was whether you were going to buy DPaint or not do any graphics, but DPaint's thunder has been somewhat stolen over the past three or so years by two new contenders; Brilliance and Personal Paint.

Personal Paint's start was somewhat shaky. It looked like a sub-standard DPaint clone and behaved like one in some respects too. It still only offers painting in 256 colours on screen (no HAM or HAM8), but it does now have an animation system and many more features besides.

Some of the more interesting ones include a virtual memory system for manipulating bitmaps larger than your memory would normally be able to hold, and the ability to produce both Random Dot Stereograms and Single Image Stereograms relatively painlessly (until you have to look at them, of course). It also has both whole-image and brush-based image processing functions, so you can paint over an area to make it embossed, for instance, which, while somewhat slow, adds a whole new set of tools for creativity.

Personal Paint is full of innovations and, unlike DPaint and Brilliance, is still in development, so it can only get better. It is also the only native paint package that properly supports graphics cards. Brilliance is also an innovative package geared towards the artist rather than the computer fiend, it has superb tools for animation and an interesting, if somewhat unfamiliar – to afficionados of the DPaint/PPaint layout – interface.



DPaint

Brilliance actually consists of two paint packages, one for normal register paint, and a version for use under HAM which saves out 24-bit files. DPaint is still going great guns, especially since it now comes with a macro recorder and an enhanced move requester, but it still seems pretty slow and it's not going to get any faster.

There is one other dedicated paint package available for the Amiga, but you need to have a pretty stonking machine to take advantage of it. The title in question is TVPaint which now supports layering effects like Photoshop (although it is limited to only three layers) and improved speed and fluidity in its painting tools. However, as I already said, you are going to need a fat wallet to get it. Not only does it cost somewhere in the region of £400 for the software, you really need at least 14Mb RAM and a fast graphics card to use it. Having said that, it is the only one of the packages I have mentioned that supports pressure-sensitive graphics tablets properly.

● **Deluxe Paint V** £59.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866

● **Personal Paint v6.3** £39.95 Amiga Computing 01625 878888

● **TV Paint 3** £329.95 Activa UK 0181-402 5770

● **Brilliance 2** £45.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866

Video niceys

Video. The last bastion of Amiga superiority. Only the Amiga makes direct genlocking or recording to video possible without expensive graphics cards. And as such, we have some stonking video titling packages such as Scala, Broadcast Titler II, Montage 24 and Big Alternative Scroller 2 to rely on for all our CG needs.

Scala is the big daddy of them all. More than a video titler really, Scala can be put to use as a Point Of Information display tool or interactive multimedia presenter. Scala comes in a variety of guises, from the simplicity and small scale of HT100, all the way up to IC400, otherwise known as InfoChannel.

InfoChannel is designed as a distributed information system and is used to control video walls and hotel TV systems. In the middle somewhere is Scala MM400 – we reviewed it earlier this year – the king of Amiga multimedia packages. With the ability to scale fonts on the fly, have wipe effects both onto and off the screen, and load almost any type of picture file format suitable for video work, Scala has a lot hidden under its bonnet.

● **Scala MM400** £249.95 Emerald Creative 0181-715 8866

● **Montage 24** £259.95 Emerald Creative 0181-715 8866

● **Big Alternative Scroller 2** £49.95 Emerald Creative 0181-715 8866

super software

Following on from last month's super Amiga feature, Ben Vost takes a look at some of the best software available for your machine

Key

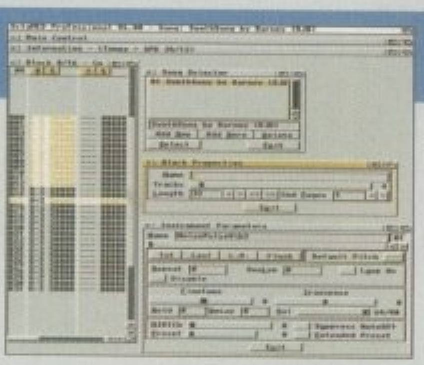
- **Red** = Out of development
- **Green** = Still in development
- **Blue** = Unsure of development status

Musical moments

The other launch platform for the Amiga, music has long been a passion for Amiga owners with composers like Danny Elfman (Beetlejuice, Nightmare before Christmas and Batman) using Bars and Pipes Pro to help them with their compositions. There are two forms of music that can be made using the Amiga, one being MIDI sequenced music using packages like Bars and Pipes or MusicX, the other being 'internal' music or chip tunes using tracker programs like Powertracker or OctaMed.

There are a vast number of mods, as the tunes are called, available from public domain sources like the Aminet, but I digress. The toppest of top notch MIDI sequencers for the Amiga has to be Bars and Pipes Professional. Indeed, Andy Bishop, one of Premier Vision's directors and no mean muso himself, has said on numerous occasions that he can do things with Bars and Pipes that still can't be done on any other platform, so it must be true.

Other contenders in the MIDI music field include the relatively recently updated MusicX and even OctaMed has now integrated MIDI sequencing into its tracker programming. On the tracker front, you can only **buy** one product and that is OctaMed, but there are umpteen Pro, Power, Noise, Blahdiblah trackers out there in the public domain.



OctaMed

- **Bars & Pipes Professional** £215 White Knight Technology 01920 822321
- **MusicX** £49.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **Octamed 6** £40 RBF Software 01703 785680

let's get serious

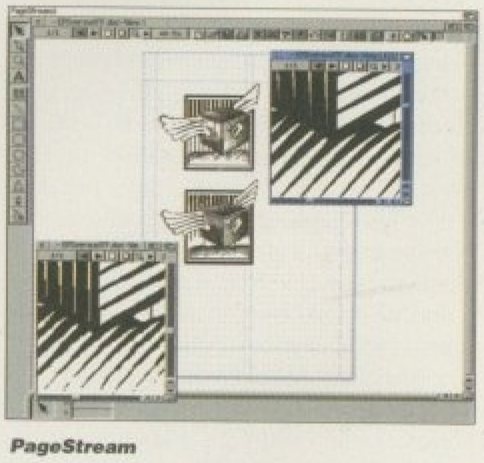
'Serious' software has always been slightly thin on the ground for Amigas, unlike certain other machines, but we do have a couple of splendid word processors in Final Writer and Wordworth. Final Writer should just be hitting a new version as you read this, with even more features including a sensible way to apply bold and italic styles to text and a 'tab' feature that needs to be seen to be understood.

In the battle for speed at word processing, Final Writer wins hands down. It also comes with more fonts and clip art than Wordworth and supports ARexx. However, a lot of people don't like Final Writer's non-standard interface and feel more at home with Wordworth's more Amiga-like approach. Both these packages really need a hard drive and a machine with at least a 68020 and 4Mb RAM to run well, but for those with a humbler specification, there is always Final Copy or Wordworth SE. Wordworth SE is merely a cut-down version of the full package, whereas Final Copy is actually a different program geared towards lower end machines. Of course, if you want total control over your page layout, you will almost certainly want to go for PageStream 3. This is a fully-blown, almost-professional DTP package. I say almost professional because there are certain features that remain to be implemented including, perhaps most importantly, the ability to produce colour separated documents. Without this ability you will be limited to either working in greyscale or printing on your own colour printer.

You could, alternatively, go for a copy of ProPage, now resurrected by LH Publishing who are able to offer it for £49.95. However, this doesn't alter the fact that the product is no longer in development.

On the database front there hasn't really been anything to match Superbase's domination of the market, but with new databases from HiSoft (Twist2), Softwood (Final Data), and Digita (DataStore), perhaps there will be a new brand leader. However, none of the databases I have mentioned seem to have the depth presented by Superbase Professional.

When it comes to spreadsheets, the Amiga is even less well served, with only TurboCalc really in the running, although there is a new title on the horizon with Softwood's Final Calc.



PageStream

- **Final Writer v4** £74.95 Gordon Harwoods 01773 836781
- **Final Copy** £49.95 Gordon Harwoods 01773 836781
- **Wordworth** £79.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **Wordworth SE** £44.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **PageStream** 3 £174.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **Professional Page v4.1** £49.95 LH Publishing 01908 370230
- **Twist2** £89.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **Final Data 2** £39.95 Gordon Harwoods 01773 836781
- **DataStore** £45.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **Superbase 4** Professional £129.95 HiSoft 01525 718181
- **TurboCalc** £49.95 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866

Processor power

ADPro introduced Amiga owners to the real power of image processing. There were other packages available, but none had the stable, flexible interface that ADPro presented to the world. Times have moved on since then – indeed ADPro is no longer being updated and the company formerly known as ASDG (now Elastic Reality) is working on products for pretty much any platform other than the Amiga. But it's not a great loss as the last version of ADPro was distinctly disappointing and we have some superb new packages to play with.

First up is ImageF/X which has gone from strength to strength since its inception as GVP's inhouse image processor. ImageF/X now supports 24-bit preview screens if you are lucky enough to be running the CybergraphX software, and its range of features and file formats that are supported has grown apace. However, the real star of this year has to be Almathera's superb Photogenics package. I could have put this in with the graphics section, but I feel Photogenics is not quite strong enough to sit in with the all-purpose graphics packages; where it scores is as a 24-bit paint and process tool, partic larly suited to retouching scans and generating stu ning backdrops and composite pictures. With inte active picture compositing and brush-based ima processing effects, the sort of pictures you can cr ate is only limited by your febrile imagination.



Photogenics

- **ADPro v2.5** £139 Emerald Creative Technology 0181-715 8866
- **ImageF/X v2.1** £249.99 (but look for special offers) from Wizard Developments 01322 272908
- **Photogenics v1.2** £59.95 from Almathera 0181-687 0040

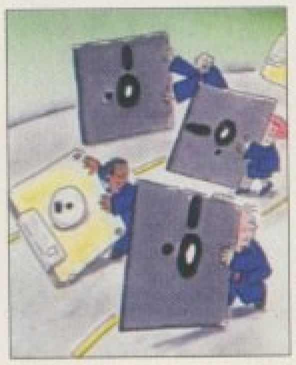
3D 4U

The Amiga was producing high-quality ray traced images before the majority of PC owners even knew what ray tracing was. With a long pedigree, LightWave is probably the best-known 3D package for the Amiga now, but you shouldn't forget the brilliant contribution made by Imagine to the Amiga's standing in the 3D arena.

There are also unknown quantities in the form of Maxon Cinema 4D and Reflections, two German ray tracers of repute, both of which will be released over here. Lightwave is the one to go for for ease of use and add-on utilities. You can get utilities that generate explosions, gravity, hair, flocking behaviour, target tracking, and so on and so on.

There is another 3D package that doesn't seem to get as much press as the other two, namely Real 3D. The older versions were quite simple to use, but with the introduction of Real 3D v2, Real became a lot more complex. Real3D is now ideally suited to people who wish to simulate physical experiments as you can assign gravity effects, collision detection, elasticity and other physical properties to the objects in your scenes.

With Real 3D it is even possible to go bowling and see the results, albeit a lot more slowly than you would if you just went down to your local bowling alley. As with any processor-intensive software package, you will find yourself growing old if you are waiting for your pictures to render on a 68000 machine, so make sure you have plenty of RAM and processor power before you go and lash out on one of these packages.



- **LightWave 4** £tbc from Cybersystems 01843 292150
- **Imagine 3.x** £99.95 from Emerald Creative 0181-715 8866
- **Real 3D v3** £319.95 from Activa UK 0181-402 5770
- **Maxon Cinema 4D** £199.95 from HiSoft 01525 718181

Miscellany

There are always some things that cannot be pigeonholed but shouldn't be forgotten because that is the case. It's the same story with Amiga software. There are certain titles, like Distant Suns, that fit uneasily into categories like educational. It's as close a fit as we are likely to get, but why categorise them at all? So here's my (admittedly limited) selection of misfit bits of software that are just to good not to mention.

First up might as well be Distant Suns. Mike Smithwick's superb bit of astronomical software should be in anyone who even has the vaguest interest in the night sky's software collection. You can spend hours trawling around the ephemeris, tracking comets and planets, finding out more information on star systems, looking at close up pictures of the moon – it's almost like having 'The Sky at Night' on your Amiga.

And that really sad link brings me onto our next selection, pop pickers – Airlink. Airlink is one of those products that you might never hear about, but would come in really handy for you. You might have difficulty getting a copy of it now that you do know about it, but you should be able to at least try the number at the bottom of this section if you are interested.

So what does it do? Basically speaking, using Airlink, you can control any infrared device within range of your Amiga. Airlink is specifically aimed at DTV people wh want to control their VCRs from th Workbench screen and consists of a sma box at the end of a cable which plugs int your second mouse port.

You can recreate your video's remot control on the screen using DPaint an then make areas on the brush 'hot' so tha they act as buttons whose functions ar set within AirLink's interface. It's a reall simple system and one that work extremely well.

My third and final treat is a piece o software that is variously described as programmer's tool, which is true programs like ProControl and Fibe Factory have been written using it – an as a multimedia package, which is als true since several POI systems have bee created using it. It's both. It's CanDo, program with a six-year pedigree, and have used it to create my AmiTCPHelpe program and a couple of front-ends fo slide show-type affairs.

- **Airlink** £tbc Cybersystems 01843 292150
- **Distant Suns** £27.95 HiSoft 01525 718181
- **CanDo** £229.95 Emerald Creative 0181-715 8866

Will there be more?

So there you have it. A short guide to the best software for your Amiga. There are many other categories to deal with like disk utilities, back up programs, educatio sampling, structured drawing, communications, programming, and so on. Perha we will be able to print a continuation of this article at some point dealing with th other categories, we'll see.

In the mean time, do go out and buy some of the software I've told you about he Your continued support of the Amiga software market will ensure future version the software that is still being developed, and make sure our remaining softw doesn't go the way of ADPro, ProPage, DPaint, Brilliance and all those others.

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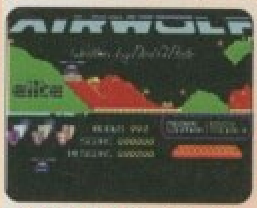
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AGA007 MINDWARP very first demo for the A1200
AGA008 KLONDIKE DELUXE AGA (3D) the best A1200 card game with glamours lady as cards face 18 + only
AGA011 SLEEPLESS NIGHT 3
AGA012 PLANET GROOVE Truly A1200 Demos
AGA013 MOTOR INVADER 2 (2D) Brilliant INVADER game
AGA015 POINT OF SCALE Great A1200 only demos
AGA016 CHROMAS- Fairly good demo.
AGA017 WORLD OF MANGA (4DISK) magnificent Japanese slide show include Japanes Chick etc recommend
AGA021 MAGIC WORKBENCH Improve the look of your WB add some function to your WB really BRILLANT
AGA022 WB 3 UTILITIES load of Wb 3 only utilities
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AGA088 ACTION REPLAY V4 Complete ACTION REPLAY.
AGA099 MADFIGHTER 2 brillant street fighter clone
AGA100 AGA BLITZ SCREEN BLANKER
AGA101 FAST GIFF 2 display GIFF pic in Workbench.
AGA102 AGA DIAGNOSTIC - NEW system tester
AGA103 BLACK BOARD AGA decent image processor
AGA105 QUICK GRAB AGA -grab AGA screen PICTURE
AGA110 WORLD BEYONDS 1 (3) stunning 256 COLOUR fantasy art. leave atari userbreathless
AGA114 SMELL LIKE CHANEL NOS brillant demo
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AGA121 MAGIC FACTORY 1 STAR TREK (5 disk)
AGA123 AGA UTIL v1&2 (2) AGA util compilation
AGA125 AGA UTIL V3 &4 (2) more of above
AGA127 MULTIBOOT- 4 various version A500 EMU
AGA128 OFFICIAL WORKBENCH 3 HARDDRIVE INSTALLER
AGA129 WB3 HARDDISK PREF & INSTALLER installing
AGA140 CROSS DOS PLUS v5.1 read/write PC files
AGA142 SUPER LEAGUE 3 -latest manager games
AGA144 SPEAK & SPELL - educational software for kid
AGA145 BIG TOPS (18 + only)HMMmm
AGA146 KELOG LAND -brillant platform games
AGA150 ACTION REPLAY V5 - NEW UP DATE TO V4
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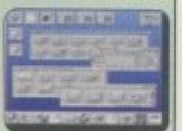
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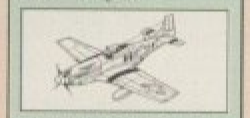


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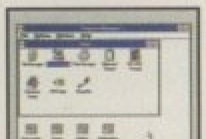
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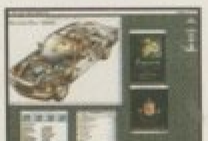


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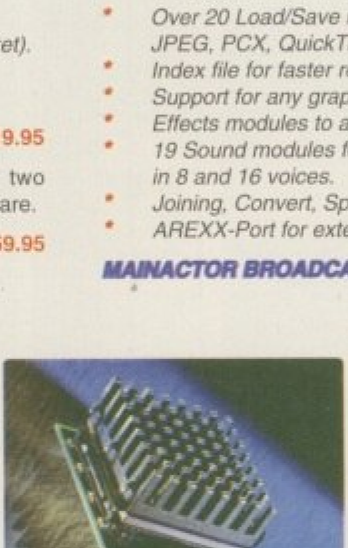
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The Doubler 4000 accelerator is an easy-to-install daughter board that simply *replaces the 25 MHz 68040 CPU with a faster 50MHz version already installed*. Anyone who can install a SIMM can install the Doubler 4000. Customers are supplied with photo-illustrated installation instructions plus the necessary extraction tool to perform the installation.



Simply putting a faster processor into an Amiga does not help much unless the system can supply enough data to keep it busy. That is why the Motorola 68040 contains a large on-chip cache. This cache frees the Doubler 4000 to work semi-independently of the Amiga memory subsystem. In fact, 85% of the time the cache contains the data and instructions necessary for the Doubler 4000 to operate at full speed.

The Doubler 4000 includes an on-chip math co-processor, and will dramatically speed up any application - such as rendering - that depends on calculations. It is completely reliable and system safe. An integral cooling system ensures that the Doubler 4000 runs cooler and more reliably at 50 MHz than the original processor.

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Painting perfection

Paul Austin examines the ultimate in freehand Amiga art

The problem with most Amiga graphics tablets is one of sensitivity. In the past, Amiga tablets have offered the ergonomics of a pen, but that's about it. Fortunately Wacom, a company renowned for graphics tablets on both PC and Mac, also support the Amiga via TVPaint and Shareware author Roland Schwingel.

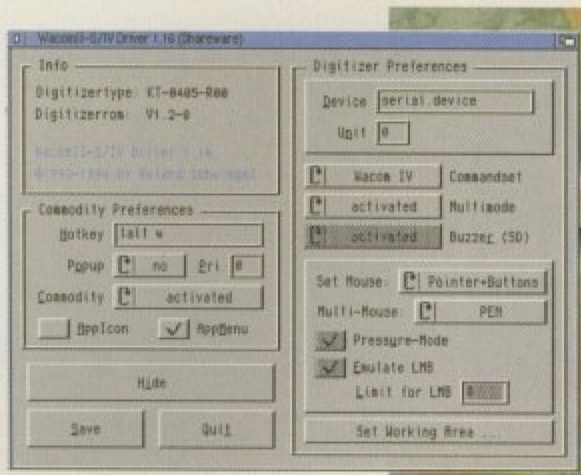
Although sensitivity isn't an option on Workbench – as there's no need outside specific applications – you can still replace the mouse with the cordless pen and tablet for general Amiga interaction.

Once installed in the WB-Startup drawer, the pen and tablet kick in on boot-up allowing all the normal click, select, drag and drop options associated with the traditional Amiga mouse. However, this doesn't mean you sacrifice the trusty rodent, because both devices work happily in tandem, with the tablet attached to the serial port rather than the mouse port. And because the control software operates on a system level, you're free to apply the tablet's ergonomic talents with any application you choose, regardless of whether it offers direct support.

Obviously, if the software doesn't offer pressure sensitive support you are limited to basic on/off application, but even so there's still an appreciable benefit within a number of applications in addition to just paint programs. Freehand sketching and general use within 3D applications, structured drawing software. In short, any program that can benefit from the subtlety a pen can provide.

Another major plus for the Wacom, as opposed to many other Amiga tablets, is its extremely economical use of CPU time. All too often, tablets attached to the serial port eat up a disproportionate amount of processor time and therefore dramatically reduce the overall performance of the machine.

Set-up and installation of the Wacom is extremely simple courtesy of the Wacom control commodity, which as you can see only requires the minimum of effort to accommodate any tablet in the Wacom range. After setting the various toggle switches, the working area of your tablet will be online. At this point the nib reacts as the left mouse button, with a double push opening drawers or applications, while a single push and hold will select and drag.



Simple set-up and guaranteed trouble free sketching in any application



Just try to do these simple squiggles without a pressure sensitive tablet – it's almost impossible

The right mouse button is replaced with a nicely designed micro-switch on the pen itself, which rests conveniently beneath the forefinger. Add the two together and you have all the traditional mouse options in a pen.

Thanks to TVPaint, Amiga users are finally allowed access to the sensitive touch which professional artists demand from a quality graphics tablet. Before firing-up the TVPaint, the first step is to shut down workbench emulation as this frees the serial port and therefore the tablet for TVPaint's built-in control. After selecting and saving the appropriate tablet name and your serial configuration from the start-up screen, you're ready to get creative.

PRESSURE SENSITIVE

Once inside the software you're automatically in tablet mode, although, like Workbench, your mouse is still active if the need arises. Although not obvious at first, pressure sensitivity affects every application of paint to canvas. Using the airbrush pressure translates into the density of paint, while a normal pen's footprint grows and shrinks as you apply the pressure. Even cut brushes benefit from the pen as the pressure applied translates into the transparency of the stamped brush. You also have complete control over the way the pressure translates to the canvas.

For solid brush strokes this defines to the amount the brush stroke will grow as the pressure is applied via a user defined percentage. Better still, there's even a definable pressure curve which will fine tune the affect in relation to the pressure applied. However, perhaps most important of all is the overall feel and speed of the tablet.

The freedom from a cord is an obvious bonus, and when this is combined with unparalleled speed and a light, accurate touch, you arrive at simply the most responsive and natural interaction between man and machine imaginable.

AC

Small but beautiful

As you've probably noticed, Wacom tablets aren't cheap. Even the UD-0608-R, which incidentally is the smallest in the range, offers only a 153.6mm x 204.8mm working area.

Although this may sound uncomfortably small, I found it perfectly adequate, and it's already played a key role in most of my recent creations, including a number of magazine covers and illustrations.

If you have a copy of TVPaint and want the best from it, a pressure sensitive Wacom is an essential. And after ten minutes you'll wonder how you got by without one.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

TVPaint 3.0 — RTG card

The bottom line

Product: Wacom UD-0608-R (PC)
Supplier: Computers Unlimited
Price: £425
Tel: 0181-200 8282

Ease of use	**10**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**8**
Overall	**6**

Write on ROM

A new piece of software from Germany claims to allow users to write to CD-ROM, but can it really be true? Gareth Lofthouse finds out

CD-ROM has been unrivalled as a cheap way of storing vast quantities of data, but until very recently the average computer user has been unable to record their own data onto disc. Things have changed with the release of Panasonic's read-write drive, reviewed last month, but with an asking price of over £500 it's still not an affordable option for many of us.

Not surprising, then, that the release of Schatztruhe's CD-Write software has been anticipated with some enthusiasm – along with an understandable amount of scepticism at the same time.

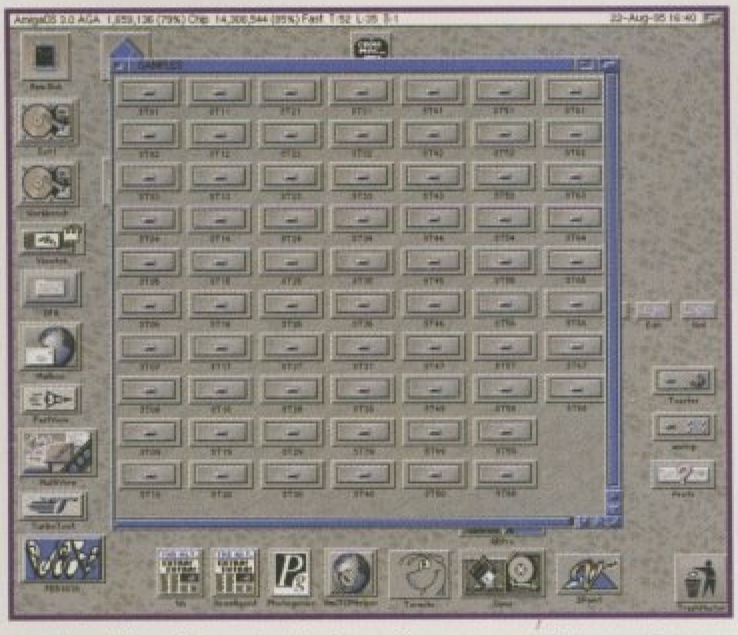
Those who were misled by the product's name will be disappointed to find that CD-Write is not the miraculous super bargain it initially sounds like. This software does not allow users to *physically* write any information onto CD, so any thoughts of having a portable 600+ Mbs storage format at your disposal to do with as you wish should be put aside right now.

So the answer to the boast on the box saying, 'What !? You still can't write to your CDs?' is an emphatic **no** as far as CD-Write goes. Evaluate it on terms of what it really does for your money, however, and this product begins to look rather useful nonetheless.

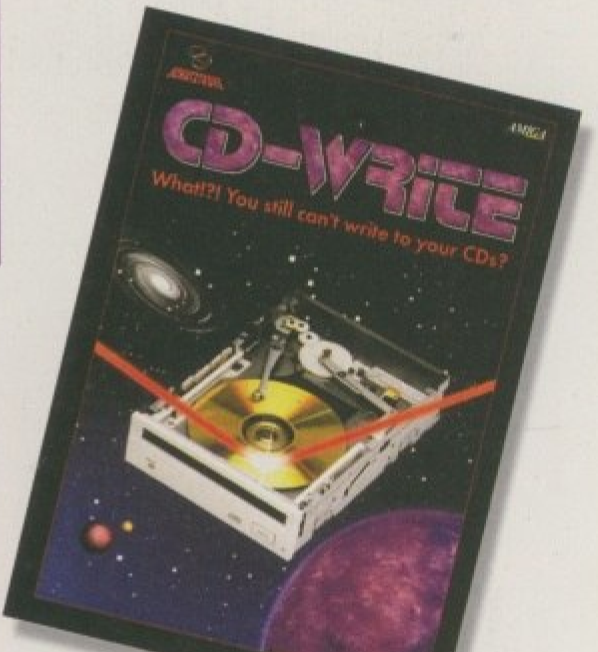
MODIFICATIONS

In reality, CD-write allows users to *virtually* add, delete or modify data on their discs. The difference is that the alterations are recorded in a drawer on your hard drive rather than on the actual CD itself. The package is simply comprised of a single floppy containing the software, and a manual, most of which seems unnecessary for the basic applications most people will use CD-write for. Installation is fully automatic with the only other requirement being that the user must create a new directory in which CD-write will record alterations to CDs.

From then on, every time you use a CD it will bring up *two* icons on your Workbench, one of which will be a pseudo version of the CD created by the software. The other icon means that the original disc contents are always available should you wish, for example, to access a file which has been virtually deleted.



Tidy your drawers: CD-Write could help you make sense of your disc chaos



In practice, CD-write allows users to reorganise and amend discs to optimise them for their individual requirements. Unlike when using a disc normally, for example, the user will be able to rearrange its appearance on the Workbench – by moving icons, changing window sizes, and so on – and then snapshot the preferred set up so it will appear whenever the CD is accessed.

It's also possible to add new programs to your CDs, though these will actually be recorded on your hard drive. Thus the four disc Aminet set could be updated by adding more recent downloads, and it will all conveniently appear in your CD0 window. Those Amiganuts who have to give Workbench their own customised appearance will also be able to replace boring and repetitive CD icons with more interesting buttons using Magic WB.

If a CD is to be used for BBS services, the program can also be used to make certain files unavailable by virtual deletion. This could be useful to prevent illegal downloads. The packaging claims many other applications are possible, but that's basically what it's all about. A final point, though, is that the program will work fine with multiple CDs.

CD optimiser

Where the product will come into its own will be in organising all those poorly categorised CDs that have flooded the market over the past few years. By creating new directories and shifting or deleting data to suit, collections can be changed from chaotic time-consumers to orderly, well structured libraries.

Take music sample collections for example, as they're often the worst of the bunch when it comes to organisation. This product will allow you to virtually delete all the rubbish and arrange the material of actual value into logically named drawers. For once you could have all the drum loops in one drawer and all the orchestral samples in another.

Verdict

More of a CD optimiser than the miracle product it's billed as, CD-Write is an unusual but welcome program all the same. Too often, files on disc archives are lumped willy nilly into huge, unstructured directories, and this package could help users begin to make sense of them.

Of course, any major overhaul of a disc's organisation could be almost as laborious as compiling a new archive yourself, but even a few changes can make useful material more easily accessible.

CD-Write would more accurately be named CD Spring Cleaner, and the price is rather high considering its uses are mainly cosmetic. Nevertheless, it's a must for the Amiga user with a large cupboard of poorly compiled CDs.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

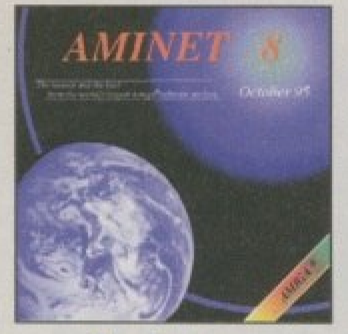
CD-ROM drive
Hard drive

The bottom line

Product: CD-Write
Price: £44.95
Supplier: Schatztruhe
Tel: +49 6171 85937

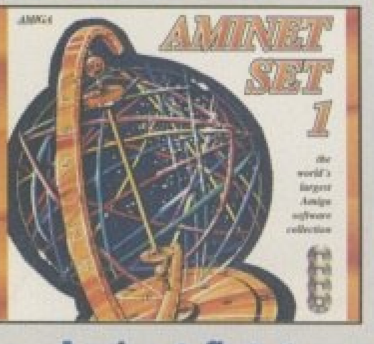
Ease of use	9
Implementation	8
Value for money	7
Overall	8

D-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...CD-ROM...



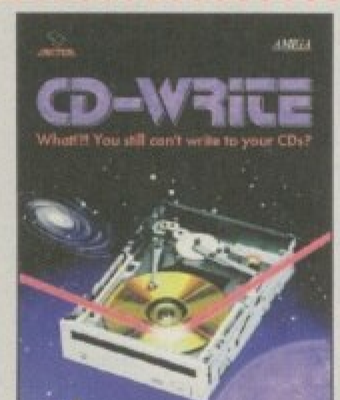
Aminet 8

Aminet CD 8, dated August 1995, consists of approximately 1,1 gigabytes of software in 3600 archives. Since the release of Aminet CD 7 more than 540 MB new software has appeared. The current edition has a special focus on modules, more than 1000 mods from Aminet were included. User friendly access software makes the Aminet CD 8 a pleasure to use. £14.95



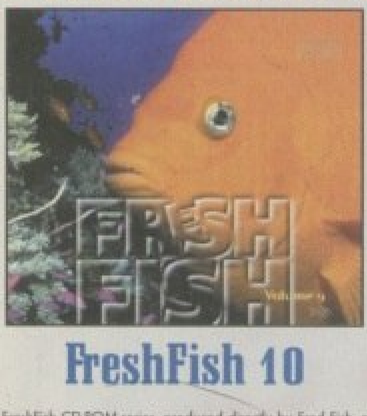
Aminet Set 1

Aminet is the world´s largest collection of freely distributable Amiga software. Up to 10.000 users access the vast archives evvery day and countless programmers publish directly via Aminet. Until recently access to Aminet was restricted to international network users. With Aminet Set 1, consisting of 4 CDs, the complete archive is published the first time. This CD-ROM-collection, which is dated January 1995, offers an almost inexhaustible reservoir of top-value Shareware. A wide variety of programs is included: Applications, Games, Demos, Pictures, Mods, Animations, Developer-Material, ... It contains approximately 4 gigabytes of software in 12.500 archives and you will enjoy the comfortable user-interface. £29.95



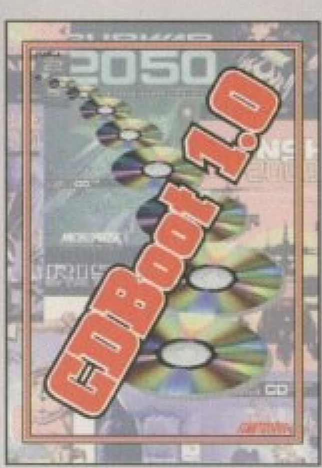
CD-Write

What!?! You still can't write to your CDs? CD-ROMs have long been an essential part of Amiga computing. Many users already own a CD-ROM drive, and the number of software packages available on CD is increasing steadily. Until now, though, it was not possible to write to CDs. We have solved this problem with our new revolutionary product: Ralph Babel and Stefan Ossowski's Schatztruhe are proud to present what can be considered a marvel of technology: CD-Write enables you to virtually write to CDs with an ordinary CD-ROM drive. From now on, you will be able to write, delete, and modify data on your CDs. This product will take you into a new era, and you will be able to utilize CD-ROM technology to its fullest. £44.95



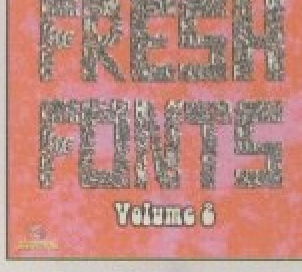
FreshFish 10

The FreshFish CD-ROM-series, produced directly by Fred Fish, provides Amiga users with hundreds of megabytes of the latest freely redistributable software. Published approximately every two months, each volume is a two CD set containing new submissions since the latest volume, as well as an ever growing selection of tools, libraries, documentation and other useful material that is updated with every release. £29.95



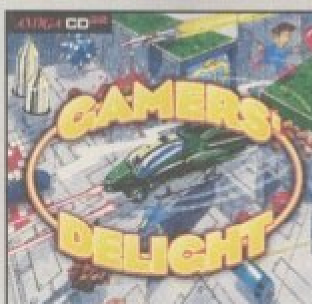
CDBoot 1.0

CDBoot is a fantastic new product that enables you to use almost any CD32 games on an A1200 or A4000 (with AT- or SCSI-CD-ROM drive and any filesystem). You can create a configuration file for each CD, containing information on the Joypad emulation. You can also save the highscore of each CD32 game. The usage and installation of CDBoot is very easy, also for beginners, due to the excellent English manual. Since the compatibility is very high, you can use 98% of CD32 games currently available. CDBoot is an excellent software solution for all Amiga-Freaks, who would like to enter the world of CD32 games! £34.95



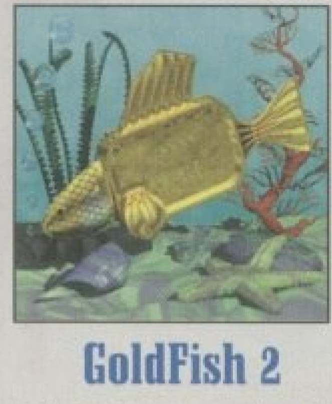
FreshFonts II

The FreshFonts II CD-ROM contains 632 megabytes of fonts for almost any computer system. Most of the fonts are freely distributable, except for the Thienen fonts, which are exclusive on this CD. Each of these fonts is included in four different formats: DMF, Agfa IntelliFont, Adobe and TrueType. There are 231 font families on this CD (each containing of up to 8 different styles). They are classified in seven categories: Deco (63 families), Non-Latin (33 families), Pictures (16 families), Sans Serif (29 families), Script (36 families), Serif (36 families), Thienen (19 families). £19.95



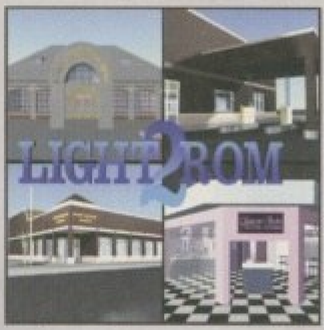
Gamers' Delight

This CD contains 40 games for the Commodore Amiga from differing categories. Action, Jump & Run, Card Games, Puzzles, Strategy Games - a whole range of computer entertainment awaits! Gamers' Delight will hold you captivated for hours and guarantees long-lasting pleasure. All games are commercial versions - no public domain & no demos! This CD can be run on any Amiga with CD-ROM drive, CDTV or Amiga CD32 Console with 1 MB free memory and Joystick/Joypad. £29.95



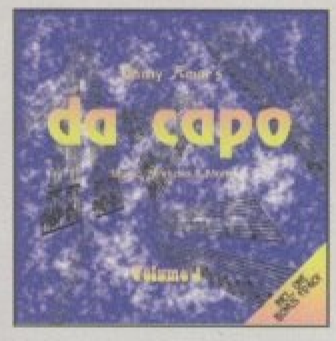
GoldFish 2

Volume 2 of the GoldFish series contains a selection of software, animations, pictures and other material released on FreshFish CD-ROM's between October 1993 and November 1994, with most of the material updated to the latest available versions. All material is included in both archived (BBS-ready) and unarchived (ready-to-run) forms. £29.95



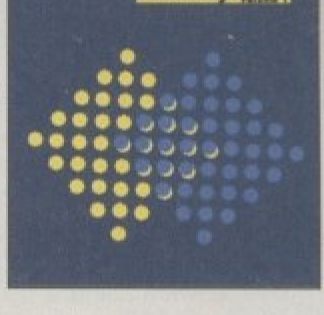
LIGHT ROM 2

The LIGHT ROM 2 CD contains almost 650 megabytes of 3D objects, images, images equences, scene files, surface attributes, bump maps and textures in IFF and TARGA formats, DEMs, and Lightwave rela- ted text files. LIGHT ROM is an invaluable resource for Lightwave users, and as a bonus, includes material for Sculpt 3D and Imagine users. £44.95



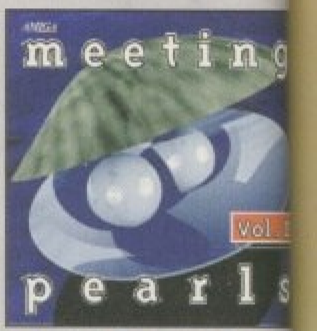
da capo

The da capo CD-ROM is a source for high-quality music, both for listening enjoyment and for samples to use in creating your own music. This is not just another random collection of modules. Many modules and samples are exclusively to da capo. Included are more than 1400 of the best available modules and 2000 high-qualioty samples. £27.95



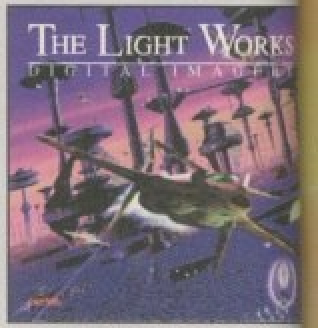
Gateway!

Gateway! offers NetBSD 1.0, a full featured UNIX-like operating system with both sources and binaries for the Amiga, i386, Sun 3, and other architectures. Go netsurfing with the large selection of supplied networking tools. Other supplied packages include a binary release of the X window system (X11R6) for the Amiga, with many additional clients, and packages such as perl, emacs, games, mail programs, and many megabytes of important text files such as RFCs and FAQs. A complete installation guide is available on the CD. There are also some AmigaDOS internet utilities, such as clients for AmiTCP and Envoy. £9.95



Meeting Pearls Vo

The Meeting Pearls Volume II contains 650 MB of the
ware via a special user interface, which has been cre
you to find the program of your choice with ease. The
MB of selected html-pages - 50 MB graphics programs
MB games - 10 MB from "The Party '94" - 13 MB di
CD-ROM and SCSI tools - 19 MB various other tools -
tional software - 25 MB terminal programs - 25 MB
mainly from Eric Schwarz - 40 MB developer tools (e.g.
compiler (DICE, Oberon, Modula), Commodore-Include
- 9 MB music programs - 10 MB midi programs - 27 MB
MB texts, FAQs, CD contents files, etc. - 40 MB linux fo
MB TeX installation (PasTeX incl. 600 dpi and fax fo
movie data base - 50 MB archives for Psion - 18 MB
MB NetBSD for Amiga, ... £9.95



The Light Works

Raytracing - A fascinating area of the computer graph
from the computer, perfectly rendered, fascinate people
world. The Amiga was the first computer to be used fo
and today it is still a leader, with many high quality prog
artist of raytracing is Tobias J. Richter from Cologne
whose detailed objects stun the people. Especially his
famous science fiction films are used to demonstrate the
of a raytracing program. The objects are highly de
extremly realistic due to the application of complex
of the models. Until now it was difficult to acquire the
order to create ones own scenes or animations. £29.95



Texture Gallery

Texture Gallery is a 2 CD-ROM set containing over 1.3 g
textures designed for graphic artists. Included are hundre
textures in several different formats, including IFF, TAR
PICT, SGI, and TIFF. These textures are perfect for
programs like LightWave 3D and can be used to create
All of the textures are represented in thumbnails rendering
previewing. £44.95

All products are available in your local Amiga-sh
or through national mail-order-companies

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Playing for money



Ever wondered how to break into the games industry? Gareth Lofthouse reports on how to get a job and climb that career ladder with the people who make entertainment software

Things may be different in these intensely competitive times, but in my day, career counselling at school was a bit of a joke. At the age of 15, an hour a week would be spent in a dusty office, shuffling in a bored, reluctant fashion between the rows of pigeon holes overspilling with corporate bumph. Sadly, the strained urgings of a disillusioned teacher anxious to prevent us from repeating his mistakes went unheeded.

To a spotty adolescent more interested in the latest batch of game releases than planning a lifetime's drudgery, there was little to fire my imagination. It might have been a different story if I'd considered making a career in entertainment software. In 1995 there are more opportunities, though. Once, the only way most people could get involved was through programming, but now there are plenty of openings for the non-technical majority in the rapidly maturing, multi-million pound games industry.

But where do you start? There are no set rules, but the first thing to realise is that forward looking game companies need people with diverse backgrounds and skills. In addition to programmers, any major game will require artists, musicians, producers, writers – and that's without going into the sales and marketing side of the operation.

To start at the bottom, however, a lot of people find a way into the games industry through playtesting. Playtesters are the people

who get paid to mess around with computer games all day, so that the developers know they're delivering the goods the consumers want.

Most companies will take school leavers for this position, and the standard salary is around £6000 – which isn't bad, considering. However, in addition to game playing skills and knowledge, it's important that applicants can demonstrate the ability to report usefully on playability problems.

Those who imagine it's a dream job should bear in mind that looking at a screen for eight hours a day replaying the same game can be rather wearing, as any of our reviewers will tell you. The job can, however, open doors.

"I know of many people who started in this role and moved on within the company to higher roles," said Glen O'Connel of Sony Electronic Publishing (formerly Psygnosis). "Our company, and the industry as a whole, is usually very good to people once they're onboard in the first place."

IN DEMAND

Higher up the ladder, creative souls are just as in demand as computer science graduates. 2D and 3D artists are required both for in-game graphics and packaging design, and companies like Team 17 say artists are always welcome to submit examples of their work. What's more, the Amiga is still widely respected as an artists computer, and adverts in the trade paper still ask for Amiga-based experience.

Creative writers are already used for many projects, not just for knocking up story lines and game-related novellas, but also for providing scripts integral to the software. With the advent of interactive movies, this role is going to become increasingly important.

In contrast to the artistic roles which were in demand from early on in the history of game design, the number of musicians making a career in the industry have been few and far between. This form of entertainment has traditionally focused solely on making a visual impact, and after months spent designing ground-breaking graphics, most titles used to have computer jingles added as an afterthought.

Once again this is changing. Multimedia, the Japanese console rivalry and home cinema, is making game designers realise that impressive in-game sound is vital if future games are going to grab the consumer's attention. Developments like Q-Sound, a surround sound system for computer games, show the way the trend is heading, and companies like Sony Electronic Publishing already have a team of in-house, full time musicians.

With games being produced by teams of programmers, artists, writers and musicians, it seems the larger game companies are attempting to adopt Hollywood-like production values. And like in any film production, someone has to bring all these resources together to get a satisfactory end result. In computer entertainment, this is the job of the producers.

Bearing similarities with the roles of director and producer in a film, the game producer manages the development team of a software project. It's their responsibility to decide what goes into a game and what changes have to be made, but they also need technical understanding with regards to what can and can't be done. It's also down to them to ensure deadlines are met and milestones are set.

As Team 17's Alan Bunker explained, it's a job that requires a delicate approach sometimes. "At the end of the day we like to leave programmers and graphic artists to be creative," he said. "But someone has to be there to sort out the ideas and encourage the team in the right direction."

With it being the highest role in development, the producers job is the ultimate career goal for many game programmers and designers. It's clearly not a job you can just walk into, however, and most people work their way up through a company, sometimes even from their humble beginnings as playtesters.

With experience being so important for every career these days, it's worth remembering that large companies like

> With games being produced by teams of programmers, artists, writers and musicians, it seems the larger game companies are attempting to adopt Hollywood-like production values.

Labour of love

The offices may be plusher, the expense account may be larger, but the increasingly corporate atmosphere that exists in some of the bigger publishing companies won't suit everybody. Making a game with a huge team of programmers, artists, musicians and writers has its advantages, but some view it as creation by committee. Indeed, some of the mediocre efforts that have been produced by this method show how great the pitfalls are.

Programmers that don't want to make too many compromises ought to consider approaching smaller, more independent developers. Sensible Software have had phenomenal success with their arcade sport games, but the atmosphere at their base in Saffron Waldon, Essex, has greater similarities with student digs than the traditional office set up.

The casual way in which these people work, however, should not deceive you into thinking it's an easy life. The hours may not be rigid, but flexibility at companies like Sensible is counterbalanced by the fact that programmers are often working well into the night as project deadlines approach. Even more dedicatio will be required if you want to develop games for th Amiga market in its current transitory state. With all bu the small companies putting their Amiga plans on hol until the outcome of Escom's relaunch plans become clearer, your best option may be to go it your own way.

Vulcan Software, makers of the highly successfu Valhalla adventures and the Timekeepers mini-series did just that. Possibly the smallest self-contained outfi in games development, this Portsmouth-based compa- ny is composed of just two people, Lisa Tunnah and Paul Carrington.

Between them they do everything from programming to writing storylines and making cups of tea – i fact, they even do their own accounts. Recountin tales of nightmare 20-hour working days, Lisa confesses that she's had doubts as to whether it's worth it: "I can see the advantages of doing things the corporate way," she commented. "Like getting holidays, fo example."

So why do they stick at it ? Because, believe it o

Write your way into work

A career in computer journalism is a topic that would require an article in itself, but it's worth knowing that lots of people high up in the games industry started out as humble reviewers for the magazines. Team 17's Marcus Dyson and Alan Bunker were writers for Amiga Format and Amiga Action respectively, and the company is employing people with journalistic skills to write, research and edit their multimedia projects.

To start of as a staff writer on a magazine, applicants merely need enthusiasm, ideas and a flair for writing interesting, though not necessarily grammatically correct, copy. The pay is disappointing, but promotion can come remarkably quickly and there is no better way of developing contacts within the industry.

Contact each of the magazines individually for details of what they require from submissions of written work. Remember also that if no permanent positions are available, you might be able to write articles on a freelance basis.

Spreading

Regardless of the quality of their product, every game company needs someone to shout about it, and this is where the PR people come in. Public relations doesn't require programming knowledge or artistic talent, but its practitioners do need the gift of the gab combined with a serious enthusiasm for games.

The job basically entails ensuring that games get plenty of magazine coverage, not just in reviews but also in previews and work-in progress sessions. This obviously involves spending lots of time communicating with the press and keeping on good terms with the publishers. It's the PR persons job to offer cover deals or help with other features, but mainly with the idea of giving the company and its products as positive and high a profile as possible.

Lisa Humphries, a PR representative for the past year with Microprose, tells how it's one of the



They did it their way – this is the staff of Vulcan software

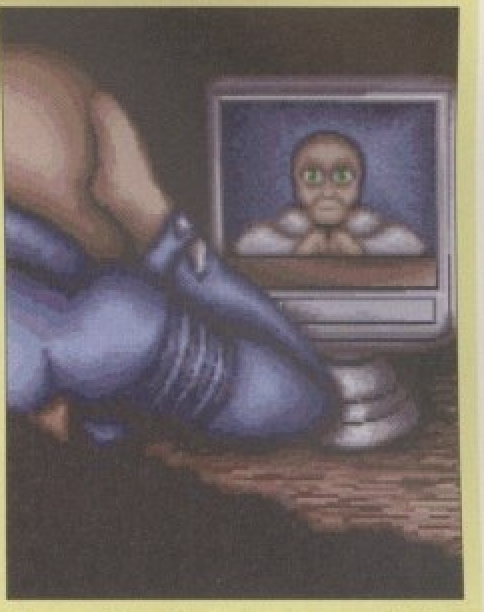
not, it's profitable and, according to Lisa, they love doing it. Questioned on the advantages of running your own business, she explains: "We do have a lot of control, and we're perfectionists. We've tried working for other people and we just didn't like it."

Vulcan are currently taking advantage of the fact that a huge installed user base is crying out for new Amiga games that are not forthcoming from the high profile companies.

This has opened the door for independent developers to show their talents, provided they adapt to the difficulties that face the current Amiga market. Thus, Vulcan have successfully overcome the lack of retail outlets for Amiga titles by shifting entirely to a direct mail order service.

Starting up is not as difficult as it may seem. "We were really into the idea," Lisa commented, "and managed to convince the bank manager it was worth investing in. You've just got to be imaginative and committed."

So if there's a ground-breaking game you know you can produce, but no-one's prepared to publish it, then setting up business yourself may be worth considering. A visit to your local Citizen's Advice Bureau will put you in touch with government enterprise schemes and other support services that will help you assess you chances.



A screen from Timekeepers, a game that proves you can make money with Amiga

Sony Electronic Publishing offer work experience, as do most of the magazines' publishers. Sony also have an evaluation scheme where they invite 10-11-year olds to give feedback on their products – worth considering if you've got children you thought were wasting time playing games.

Finally, a bit of advice on how to make that vital good impression you'll need to differentiate yourself from all the other people knocking at the door. Deirdre Murphy from Warner Interactive urges: "Network – use the contacts you already have. Offer a unique skill. And, above all, show *enthusiasm*."

the word

better jobs to get into without experience. "I was working in retail at WH Smiths," she explained. "I was selling music and games, so I had a rough idea of what was going on, but not a particularly extensive one."

Writing speculative letters and sending CVs, however, got her a job with Microprose which she says is fun, despite being demanding. However, an outward going personality is a pre-requisite. "You definitely can't be a wall-flower," she points out.

PR can lead to jobs within games sales and marketing, and hence ultimately onto the jobs at the top of the entertainment software industry. In comparison to the totally casual atmosphere of the development team, where heavy metal t-shirts, jeans and trainers are not an uncommon sight, most companies require more business-like presentation from its PR and marketing team.

Playing the money game – the do's and don'ts

Do – your home work. Take your game knowledge seriously, as all companies will want you to demonstrate enthusiasm, understanding and originality of ideas.

Don't – repeatedly phone companies unless it's the last resort. Most publishers and developers are still too small to have a personnel manager, so you're likely to start irritating the wrong person. Most companies prefer written applications.

Do – make the most of any applicable experience you may have. Work experience, submitted programs or articles, and skills developed in other lines of work can all make a difference.

Don't – imagine the fact you're a game playing ace means a lot. Unless you want to be a playtester, that is.

Do – remember that many jobs in the computer industry require good communication skills. In such cases, anoraks need not apply.

Don't – take the industry too lightly. These people are serious about making games, and they'll expect you to present yourself in a similar manner.

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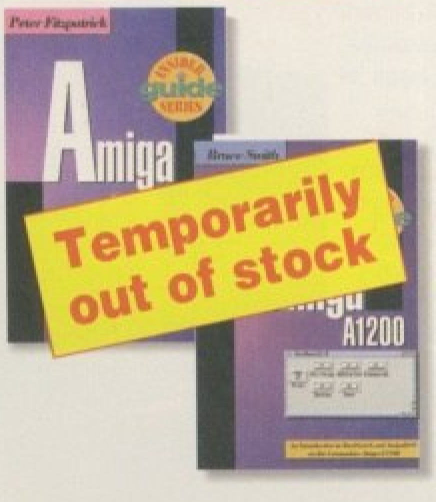
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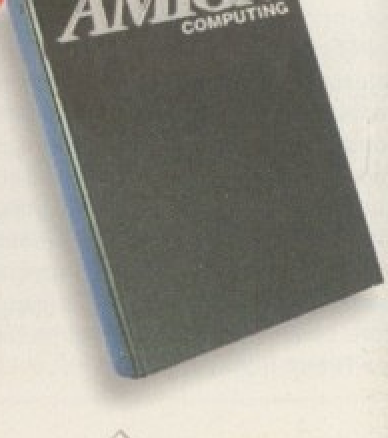
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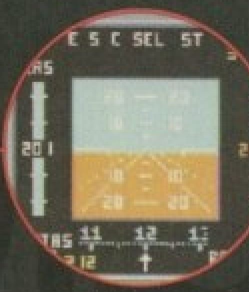
CODE REFERENCES

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SYSTEM

Your essential guide to Amiga gaming

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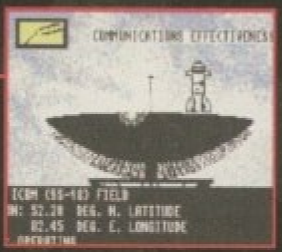
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Arcane finally decide to release a challenger for the likes of Overdrive and Roadkill. Who will reign as champion?



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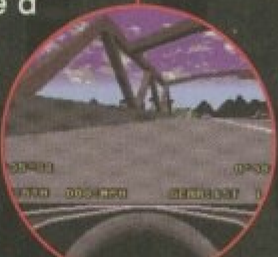
Two cheap strategy games on offer this month, courtesy of CDS and Guildhall Leisure

Previews



Odyssey

A strangely titled game full of mystical excitement with a blend of mythical magic... or something



Leading Lap

Kellion Software's latest racer goes into the garage for a full service. Is it a faulty alternator or the battery? Take a look under the System bonnet

Virtual Karting

Small, low powered, dinky cars make their way onto the Amiga, thanks to OTM. Oh yes, thanks a lot



By Tina Hackett

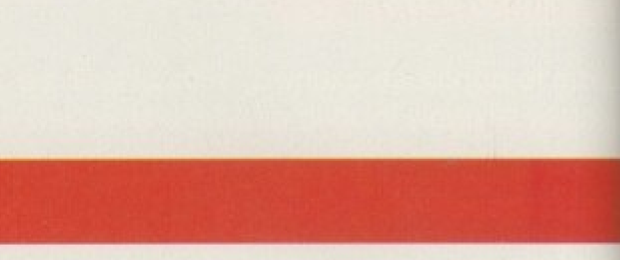
Star Crusader update

The release of Gametek's space flight simulator, Star Crusader, is imminent. Graphics are looking pretty smooth and it has fully texture mapped ships and 'state-of-the-art' 3D technology.

From the playable demo we've just looked at, there will be some stunning different views to choose from including external shots to a torpedo camera which lets you tail your torpedo as it is launched towards its target.

Control is via the keyboard and the interface is fully configurable which will make gameplay easy to execute. There will also be an extensive mission replay system which will allow you to rewind the action as well.

Star Crusader will be available for both the Amiga and CD32 in October priced at £29.99.



Will Star Crusader rival games like Elite?



Different views will make it graphically appealing

Manic Pinball



Pinball Mania continues the series of 21st Centuries high-quality pinball sims

21st Century are pledging their support to the new Amiga machine by releasing their latest title, Pinball Mania, for the A1200 and A4000T. Developed by the Spidersoft development team, it will contain four new tables, each with a new theme. Tarantula, as you'd expect, contains all sorts of horrid things like locusts and poisons. Jailbreak has an unforgiving judge who likes to dish out life sentences, Kick-Off aims to create all the atmosphere of a football match, and lastly there will be Casino, a miniature version of the real thing.

The table size will be increased, multi-ball added, and four flippers on every table will provide extra challenge. A UK release date of 25 October has been set.



All the tables will have different themes and top notch graphics

Stone-age computers

We had a conversation in the office about the many different computers there have been over the years, the ones that have just faded away, a mere recollection in the minds of gamers. So with this in mind, System hope to put together a feature along these lines. However, there is just one problem – we can't actually find any of this old hardware. So any readers out there who can remember these old machines, please send in your thoughts on the machines and even the games you could play on them. Even better – if you still have them, why not send in a photograph too.

Where are they now?...

Remember some of our previews from dim and distant months, and now wondering what ever happened to certain games? We didn't lie – they just didn't come out. Sorry.

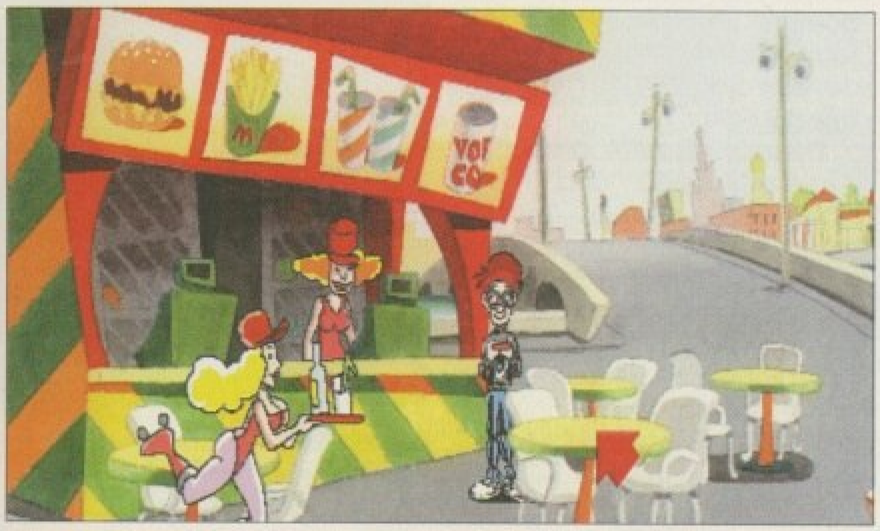
Pizza Tycoon – unfortunately, this intriguing looking business sim just isn't coming out on the Amiga. The game would only work on certain machines and MicroProse believed it wouldn't be worth bringing out. Distribution deals with magazines were considered but nothing as yet.



Pussies Galore – I don't think it is any great loss to the games community that this won't see the light of day. A rather cheesy looking platformer to say the least.

The Adrenalin(e) Factor – Mirage's rather good looking cyberpunk blast-'em-up also now looks unlikely to come out on the CD32. The same goes for their Rise of the Robots 2 release.

Big Red Adventure – rumour has it that Core Design's brilliant looking Russian adventure is unlikely to see the light of day on the Amiga. A great shame as this looked rather good.



Don't be disheartened by this, as there are still releases in the pipeline and we'll be attending next month's European Computer Trade Show to bring you bang up to date with all that's happening on the Amiga games scene.

The one and only

Things started to look pretty bleak for Amiga magazines when Emap's Amiga games title was put 'on hold.' However, only a month later, publishers Maverick must have decided Emap had made a hasty decision and have relaunched The One, which is a positive confidence boost to the market. They've decided to keep the magazine's unique style.

Oink, Oink

Sounding like a blatantly sexist title, 'Karate Babes' is going to do little for the image of games for both sexes. It comes complete with atrocious storyline which is a shame because the first Amiga game to use full-screen, 256 colour, Full Motion Video graphics, and the developers, Creative Edge Software, claim: "The graphics on this will make you feel like you are watching TV on your Amiga!"

The game uses the talents of people trained in martial arts who have been digitised. As the character moves, so do the backgrounds and they update accordingly. The game is divided into two parts – one is the fighting section, the other is an interactive movie which develops according to the choices you make.

Karate Babes also makes the plot an important part of the game (joy) and goes along the lines of: A new competitor called 'Karate Babe' wins the worldwide martial arts tournament, taking the title off the two-time winner. As a result, the defeated competitor loses his corporate sponsor, his girlfriend, and a role in a movie. He claims the victory was a fluke and demands a rematch. She refuses, and as a last attempt to force a rematch, he kidnaps Karate Babe's sister. Karate Babe must find her sister and defend herself against the kidnappers.

Creative Edge Software have some other titles on the way and among these is Bikini Karate Babes which contains digitised women in bikinis fighting. Nothing like these frustrated programmers, eh?

Ready for take off!

The eagerly awaited Flight of the Amazon Queen from Time Warner is finally here. Set in 1949 it is a parody of all the popular '40's adevnture serials.

The plot follows the exploits of Joe King, a pilot whose mission is to stop the evil Dr Frank Einstein, rescue the Amazons and win over the beautiful princess. (Aah).

The release date has been set for the 25th September and we'll be bringing you a full review next issue.



Flight of the Amazon Queen due to arrive next month

Inherit the earth

Life's unfair at times. There is a brilliant looking adventure game which you can find on Aminet called Erben der Erde. As you can see, it is German and this is the problem. It's in the hands of American company New World Computing and as yet it is undecided whether or not there will be an English version. We certainly hope so because the game's definitely not the same when we have to make do with translations from our Deputy Editor.

There is an AGA and ECS version planned, and it all looks rather unusual. Rather than your usual adventure stuff, you control a team of animals and graphically it looks stunning, with some incredibly smooth scrolling.

So keep your fingers crossed for this one.



As you can see it is in German. Looks good though.

SYSTEM

Top slots

We recommend the best games from the past few months

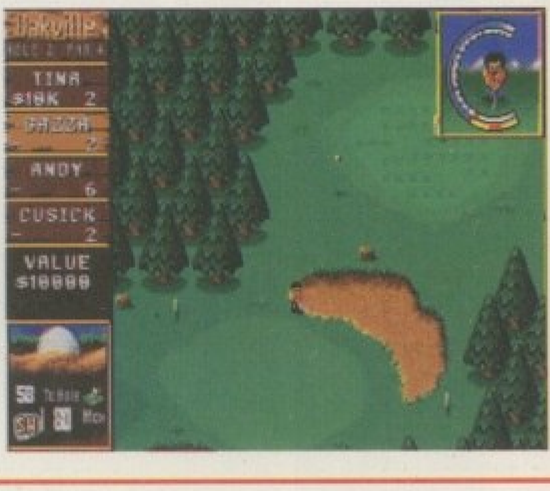


Player Manager 2 – if you enjoyed On the Ball's graphics and Championship Manager's depth and gameplay, this is undoubtedly the definitive management sim. If you want a serious statistical football game with plenty of thrills, then Player Manager 2 comes top of the list.

Gloom – the graphics are the best yet for games of this genre. Gloom is completely packed with smooth graphics, a huge challenge and, most of all, action and excitement. It's certainly the best attempt yet, although with similar efforts only weeks away from completion, only time will tell which one will rise above the rest.

Colonization – Colonization is a very in-depth strategy game and does take a while to get into. Once there, though, it's a thoroughly absorbing title that has been intelligently written. There is more action than you might think for a turn-based game and it continually engages the player in planning their next move. For the more cerebral gamesplayer, this comes highly recommended.

Sensible Golf – it's certainly a fantastic little arcade game with many months of entertainment. If you can manage to stay calm during the frustrating parts, you'll find it very enjoyable – especially with four players.



Timekeepers – there's no doubt that this is Vulcan's best release so far, with an engaging game system that is easy to use and rewarding when your plans are successful and your troops drop through the exit one by one. At £12.99, Timekeepers offers good value for money and packs a healthy amount of playability.



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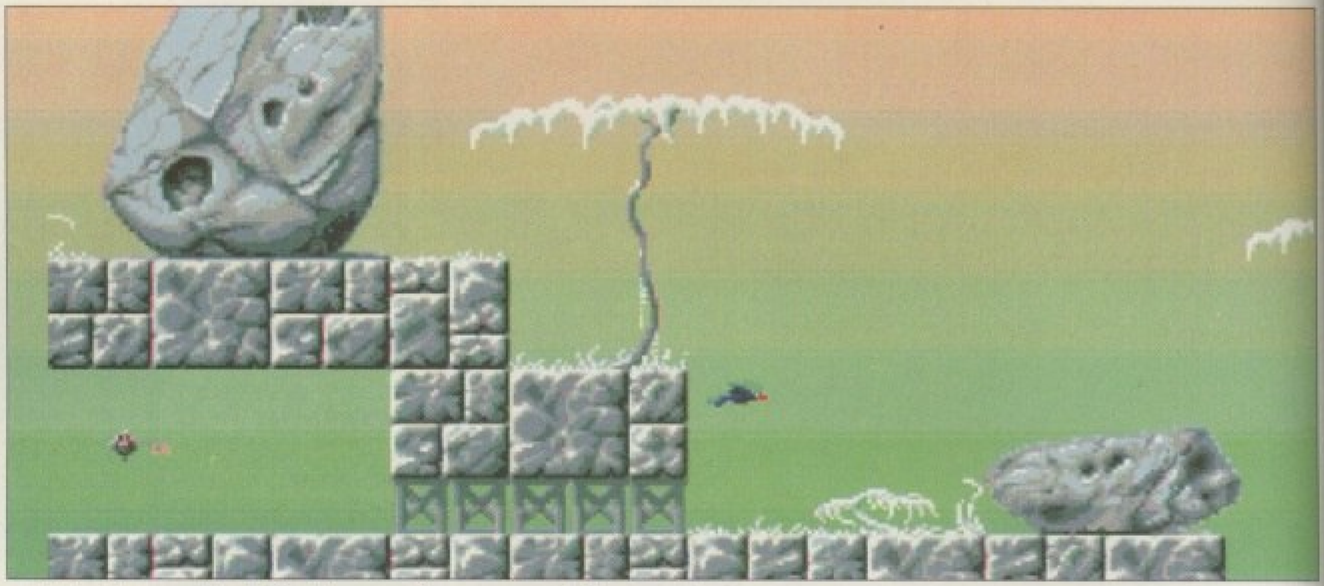
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They key on the left will come in very useful for opening doors, especially the ones that lead to crystals

Audiogenic are not especially known for their contributions to the platform genre, being more sports-like - especially with releases like Graham Gooch's Cricket and Wembley International Soccer, and soon to be Imran Kahn's Cricket all appearing, not to mention a number of other successful games.

Audiogenic are certainly not letting themselves slide down that pit where other companies have recently been disappearing to - although, one of their latest products, Bubble and Squeak 2, is on hold.

However, one title is certain to go ahead, and it goes by the name of Odyssey - a platform game which has quietly possessed many morphing capabilities. It's a side-on platform game which could deliver a different perspective to the already mountains of usual platformers out there. Let's see.

The idea behind Odyssey is to collect various crystals from several different islands to complete the game. On the way through, you'll encounter a number of creatures trying to prevent you from doing so. With a large number of perplexing puzzles that must be solved to access other areas, Odyssey is looking a lot like a puzzling platformer - like Delphine Software's Flashback.

During your quest you will encounter a number of various monsters such as vultures, and an army of small people armed with huge swords which you must overcome to collect the crystals and proceed further. You must fight them while losing as little energy as possible, although what makes Odyssey good to play is the fact that when you do lose a serious amount of energy, you don't have to trundle around over-cautiously. Instead, standing still for a good 10 seconds will get your breath back - replenishing your energy and helping you get past the tricky parts.

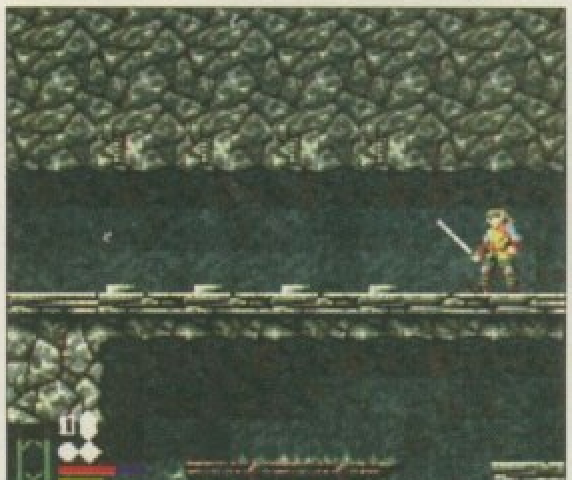
One of the hardest parts of Odyssey is negotiating the bigger rocks. You can take a swipe at them

Morphing mania

When you acquire the morphing power, it is possible to morph into a number of objects. For instance, you can morph into a rock to smash smaller rocks by falling from a great height and then rolling through tiny gaps. This is essential for reaching the keys which will open the doors to the crystals.

You can also morph into a bird and fly high above the lower platforms which you wouldn't be able to reach if you were using the hero without the special morphing powers. The last morph is a grasshopper, which obviously allows you to jump great distances to reach hidden platforms you normally wouldn't have seen.

The morphing characteristic adds a lot to the originality of Odyssey, making it something different from the bog-standard type of platform game around today. The idea of using different characters to solve different puzzles adds a lot to the depth and challenge tremendously.



Pressing the buttons activates various traps and doors which must be negotiated



The small rock people will do their best to prevent you from collecting the crystal



Although, obviously, you can't hear them, the sound effects are very realistic indeed



The tunnel leads to the outside bit where you will encounter even more monsters

with your sword which will set them rolling, but you have to be careful because you may end up trapped behind it or it may block your path. These puzzles will no doubt have even the most experienced games player tearing their hair out.

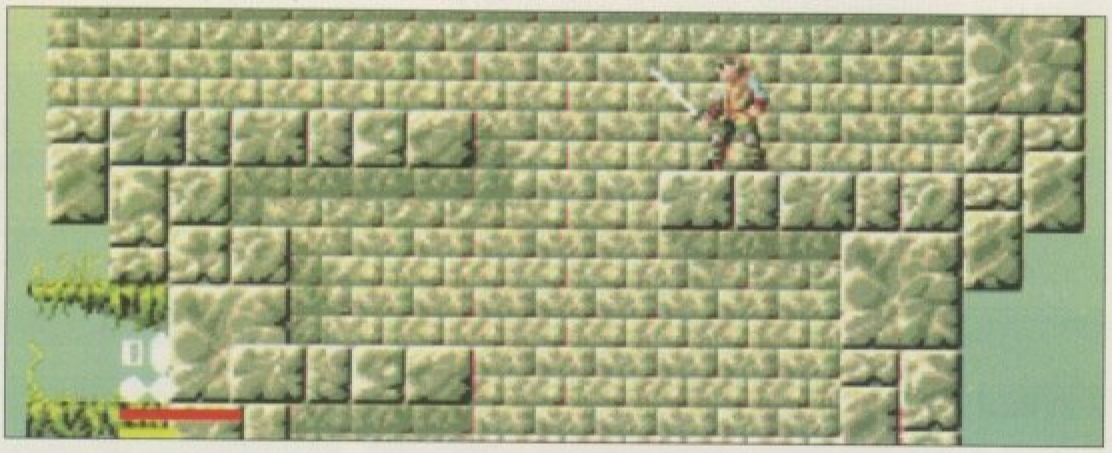
What people may fail to realise, which I'd better explain, is the fact that Odyssey isn't just a game completed by running from left to right, killing monsters and picking up the crystals at the end. You have to negotiate all the puzzles which, believe me, are quite taxing. They involve moving rocks onto various buttons, directing shooting arrows towards pressure zones, and even morphing into different, smaller creatures to squeeze through tiny gaps which are only accessible to the smallest of insects.

There are several large islands to battle through, accompanied by truly fantastic backdrops. At the beginning, when you select an island, a human hand appears as a pointer – using very impressive method animation with the dark black shadow, which makes it smoother than a baby's bottom. The morphing sequences are also animated in this way – proving what a graphical feast it will be when it finally hits the shops.

Odyssey



By Andy Maddock



The graphics and animation are both looking very good. Let's hope we see more of them in the finished version



There is a stiff amount of opposition out there ready to crush your high hopes

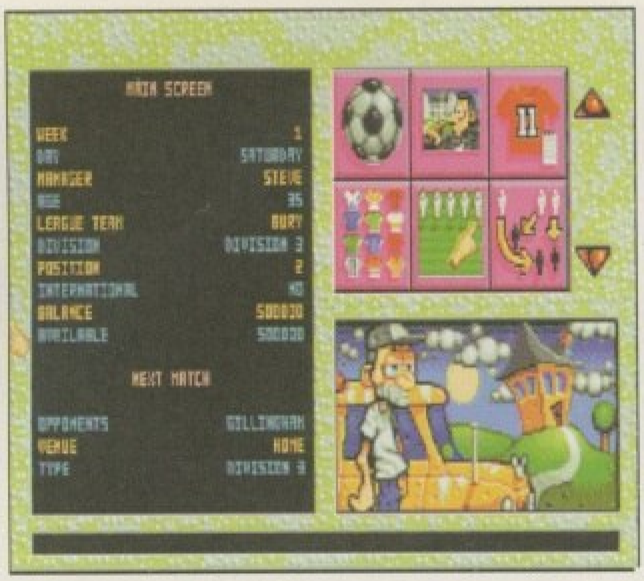
> ‘With a large number of **perplexing puzzles** that must be solved to **access other areas**, Odyssey is looking a lot like a puzzling platformer’

Final word

Overall, Odyssey is looking very complete, especially graphically and gameplay wise. The game is already running very smoothly, with no noticeable glitches standing in its way.

When it's finally released I can almost certainly see it being a huge success. Audiogenic may have latched themselves on to a winner. Keep an eye out for a full review very soon.

SYSTEM
review



All your current information is displayed on the right, and your status screen is at the bottom, in picture format

Club and



GRAPHICS 74%

SOUND 72%

GAMEPLAY 79%

OVERALL 78%

PUBLISHER
Leisuresoft UK

DEVELOPER
Boms Computing

PRICE
£19.99

DISKS
2

HD INSTALL
Yes

SUPPORTS
All Amigas

Another football game arrives as we watch another season get under way. The winter months are fast coming upon us and could be the perfect time to sit out the first rounds of the Auto Windscreen Shield and head for managing success on the Amiga.

This time, a relatively large company who are renowned for distributing PC and Amiga peripherals are invited to try their hand at the Amiga games scene. Leisuresoft UK intend to make a big impact on the gaming front, and a football game could be just what it takes.

Football games are undoubtedly the Amiga's strong point, and have brought in more cash than any other genre. All the all-time greats have appeared on the Amiga and incidentally, most of them never made successful conversions onto the PC or any console. Sensible Soccer, Kick Off, Player Manager, Goal and Man Utd – Premier Champions are just a selection who owe their huge success to the Amiga.

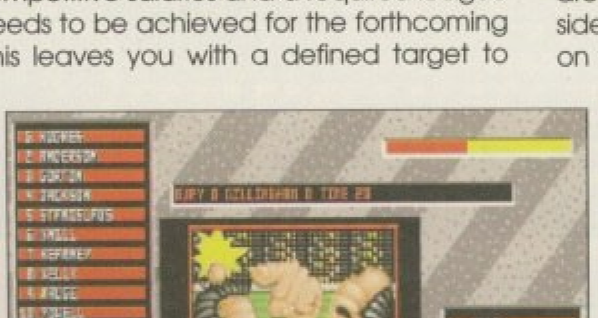
Club and Country is one of the few football management games that offers jobs on club and international level. Sensible Software had aspirations to the idea but it was never given the time of day. After 10 seasons of non-stop promotions, relegations and cup exits, the last thing you want to do is retire. Club and Country gives you the option to manage the national team when your success becomes too much for the rest of the pack.

At the beginning of Club and Country, you are given a list of clubs to take on in division three. They all offer competitive salaries and a required league placing needs to be achieved for the forthcoming season. This leaves you with a defined target to achieve – failure to do so means sacking will be imminent.

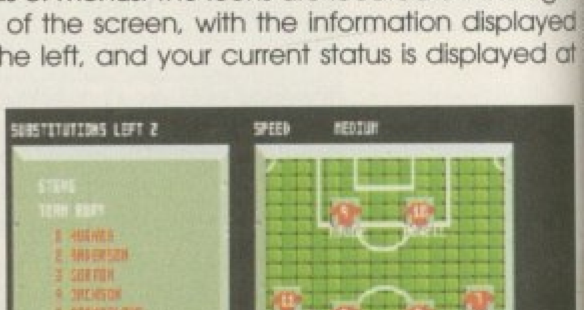
Club and Country has an easy-to-use icon system which allows you to view all the statistics within seconds without having to plough through hundreds of menus. The icons are located on the right side of the screen, with the information displayed on the left, and your current status is displayed at



The squad select screen displays the player's ages, position and shirt number. Where are their stats?



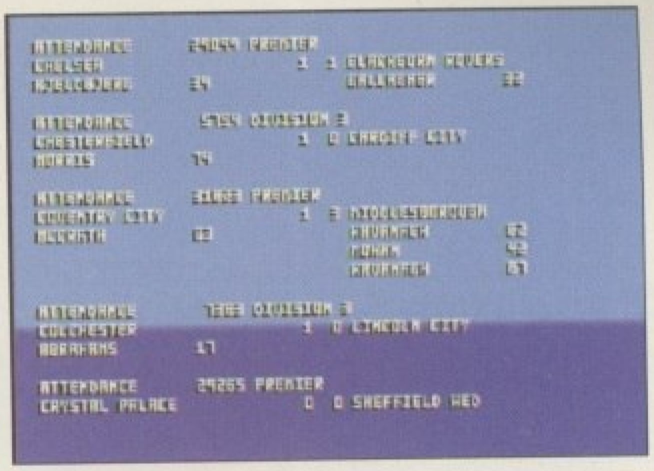
The match sequences don't reflect the depth of the game. Also, the player's performance is displayed confusingly over the player's name



Pressing the mouse during the game will bring up a screen whereby you can change your team line-up

Cartoon to cleavage

All the usual options are included – transfers, stadium development, physiotherapy and tactical editors. The game is shown in cartoon form, which is a real shame as the amount of options and realism within the actual management is spoilt and lost through the showing of these cartoon pictures. Showing a heavily cleavaged nurse as a physio, especially sporting a rather plastic uniform, is a bit out of hand as today's game is no longer purely a man's.



After you have finished your match, all the results will come up in a vidiprinter-like style

Country

Reviewed by Andy Maddock





The finance screen gives you an idea of your weekly income and expenditure

the foot of the screen as a picture. You begin with a small house, small car, and a generally unappealing appearance. As you progress through the divisions picking up trophies and promotions, more money will come in, thus enabling you to afford a better life. So the actual objective of the game isn't to be the best team in the world in a completely fictional way, but to earn enough money to live on and with luck, progressing and enjoying the higher life of football management.

The actual match sequences are immensely lacking in quality – there is no animated, graphical action, just a short and brief description on injuries and bookings, so you can't acquire a true estimation of your team's ability. You can make substitutions and swap players around during the match, but you can't alter the way your team plays.

Although these comments seem harsh in some respects, they are purely cosmetic and could have been tidied up. The depth and realism is present but simply overshadowed by the cartoon pictures. Another problem is the research. At first glance it looks like all the players' data is present and correct because Dennis Bergkamp is in Arsenal's line-up. However, it seems the rest of the squads haven't been touched. There's no sign of an editor either, so it looks like you're stuck with them – unfortunately.



The sexist pictures come into effect again. The male builder is the one who does the work, and the female is the ticket girl

> “Club and Country is one of **the few** football management games that **offers jobs** on club and international basis”

Final word

Compared to the likes of Player Manager 2 and On The Ball, Club and Country doesn't even get a look in. The football game industry is becoming increasingly popular once again and it's certainly not going to be an easy task for anyone to better the management games that are dominating today's market. It isn't a bad effort, but one which will linger around the bottom of the league, staring relegation in the face for a few seasons. It all boils down to lack of presentation. If you already have Player Manager 2 and On The Ball, Club and Country wouldn't be a bad purchase. If you're that football mad, you'll probably buy it anyway!



Graphics and presentation aren't that impressive



Approach Trainer aims to provide ultimate realism

Approach Trainer

Reviewed by Tina Hackett

GRAPHICS	50%
SOUND	75%
GAMEPLAY	71%
OVERALL	72%

PUBLISHER	Thalion
DEVELOPER	Rainer Bopf
PRICE	£29.99
DISKS	TBA
HD INSTALL	No
SUPPORTS	All Amigas 1Mb+

Flight sims usually fall into two main categories. There's either the action-packed dogfight types such as Reach for the Skies and F19 Stealth Fighter, where you take to the skies and aim to obliterate the enemy, or there's the other, the *serious* kind that accurately recreate the modern-day flying experience.

Those in this category (of which there are few – the only ones that spring to mind are A320 Airbus and Proflight) are the ones that can seem very bland to the uninitiated, but for those who take the trouble to read the hefty manuals and study the flight charts, they are rewarded with a very realistic simulation of the real thing.

Anyway, falling into this latter category is Thalion's latest offering, Approach Trainer, the next one along in the Airbus A320 series. Made by the same Rainer Bopf which created its predecessors, Approach Trainer aims to simulate the approach and landing of a plane. Described as a simulation of a simulator, it allows the player to practice the procedures needed to land a plane at one of Europe's 58 most important airports.

The first thing you need to know is that although it is a supplement to Airbus A320, you don't need the previous game to play it and the trainer program does not assume that you are familiar with the series. So if you've never played before don't worry – you can learn from scratch (and have to read all the manual – joy!).

Starting with the training mode you are given electronic aids to help get through the procedures step by step, and as you progress you can turn off each feature one by one. You can also choose the airport, the weather, and whether you tackle a long or short approach. It is also possible to alternate between day and night flights.

When more experienced, you can try the

> ‘If you want a game you can get straight into then it's **not for you**’

Scoring Mode where the computer randomly generates a situation and then records the points achieved in a log book. And when you're feeling really confident, try testing your skills against an opponent, taking alternative turns under the same conditions.

Although graphics aren't that impressive, attention to detail has been made such as improved PAPI lighting, airfield detail, and improved 'Glass cockpit' layout. For ultra-realism, accurate ILS charts have been included too.

This is one of the very few games that supports an analogue joystick. In case you haven't got one and want to use a PC joystick instead, at the back of the manual there are instructions on how to make your own Interface-Converter to use a PC analogue joystick – so get your soldering iron ready.

Final word

Like most flight sims it is accompanied by a dauntingly thick manual – so needless to say, if you want a game you can get straight into then it's not for you. However, patience pays dividends and if you take the time to plough through, you'll find a very rewarding and very comprehensive title. The graphics are rather grim, but this shouldn't bother true sim fans too much.

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Kompart return to grace the Amiga screens once again. After many months of pure speculation, Turbo Trax has finally arrived - in Ferrari-like fashion too.

Kompart, responsible for the abundance of Amiga releases during these last few months, are adding to their already well-developed collection a challenger for the likes of Overdrive and Roadkill. These two weren't particularly successful compared to the likes of the late '80's Nitro. This was one of the few top-down racing games that packed pure challenge and action. The idea was to race against a series of opponents in various cars. A whole host of tracks were included making this one of the most pleasing and satisfying games of all time.

During the early '90s, Supercars was introduced on the Atari format, later making its way across to the Amiga. This was viewed top-down just like Nitro, but where Nitro failed in terms of variety, Supercars filled the spot almost too perfectly. Featuring an option to buy more cars and progress onto later tracks, Supercars' success was inevitable. What made Supercars incredibly popular was the fact it offered a different perspective. The idea of layered tracks was welcomed with open arms by games players everywhere.

After the recent releases of Roadkill and Overdrive, Turbo Trax is the latest top-down racing game. After being in the pre-production phase for months, will it finally pass its driving test?

There are three modes of play - Arcade, Time Trials, and Practice. The arcade mode is basically to beat five other computer opponents to cross the line first, picking up some cash to spend on your car to increase its handling and power. After you complete a race, you are given a number of items to buy to increase your car's capabilities. You can buy five types of engine, steering wheel, fuel and tyres. The better the component the more expensive it'll be.

In the arcade mode, the computer opponents are especially hard and the car in pole position always seems to be half way round the course before you've even turned the first corner. It'll take an enormous amount of practice to enable you to come first, or even second.

To slow you down, various obstacles are placed on the tracks - the oil is undoubtedly the worst. Having said that, it's not as frustrating as you can imagine. On most racing games, sliding on oil will send you careering into the crash barriers, almost certainly putting you out of contention for first place. However on Turbo Trax, the frustration factor is set just about right. If you do happen to be in an unavoidable position resulting in skidding over an oil leak, the worst that can happen is a simple 360 degree spin followed by a loss in speed. This enables the opponents to gain a little, but not so much that it ruins the entire race. The

Comparing cars

There have been a significant number of top-down racing games released recently, namely Roadkill, Overdrive and Micro Machines. In the past we have seen the likes of Super Sprint, Nitro and Indy Heat. Oh, alright, so Indy Heat wasn't specifically top-down but more of a mid-slanty top view that worked surprisingly well.

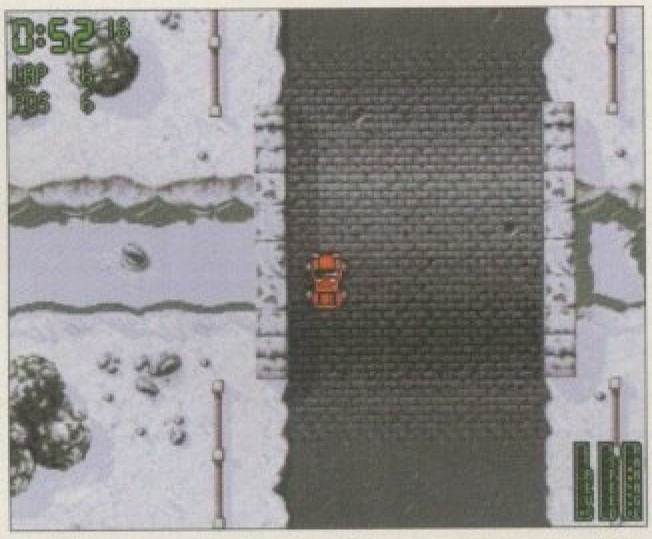
These are the only commercial releases I can think of. Most of the top-down racers emerge from Public Domain, and some of the decent PD racers include Moose Drive and Road To Hell.

GRAPHICS	81%
SOUND	77%
GAMEPLAY	89%
OVERALL	86%

PUBLISHER	Kompart
DEVELOPER	Arcane
PRICE	29.99
DISKS	3
HD INSTALL	No
SUPPORTS	All Amigas



Don't forget to brake for the pedestrian crossing. Oh, and don't run any grannies over either!



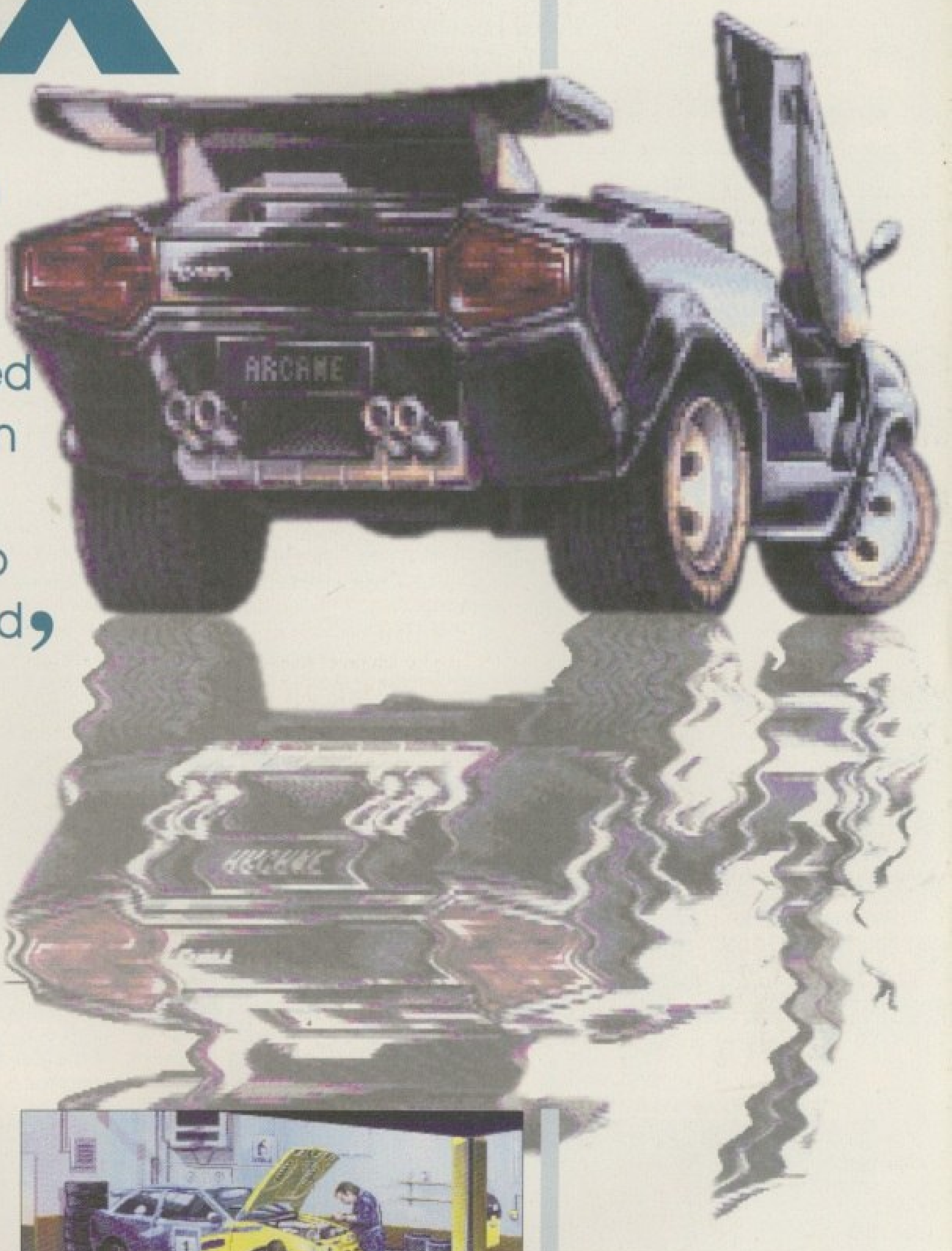
Driving over the bridge in the snow. It's certainly not a wise idea to practice handbrake turns now!



The desert track is the perfect track for a bit of fun with plenty of dunes and jumps

Turbo Trax

Reviewed by Andy Maddock



> ‘the car in pole position always seems to be half way round the course before you’ve even turned the first corner. It’ll take an enormous amount of practice to enable you to come first, or even second’

other mode of play is Practice, whereby you can select any course, any car, and can get to know each course, so when you come to take on the arcade mode you'll have an idea of the corners and where and when to brake etc. The last mode is Time Trials whereby you have to complete the lap in the fastest time which can then be saved to disk for future reference.

To help you in your quest for loads of cash and a decent reputation, there are all sorts of helping hands. You can pick up spanners which reduce your damage, money to give you something to enhance your car, and turbos which will give you that extra speed – maybe enough to carry you across the line in first place. There are three types ➤



Crossing the finish line in first place is probably the hardest task within Turbo Trax



You can purchase components to improve your car and achieve a better position in the next race

Gearbox problems

Every car I have known has had problems with it in one way or another. If it's not the gearbox, you'll probably have left your keys inside. It's funny the way all the problems seem to occur just after the two month warranty has expired. Oh well, thankfully none of these problems appear in Turbo Trax.

Although every car featured in Turbo Trax is extremely high powered, you wouldn't really expect the type of acceleration you are presented with. The gear changes are noticeable, unlike many other racers, and the pitch of the engine noise is also heard. Most games seem as if they are controlled in first gear all the time, and a high pitched roaring noise becomes extremely annoying.

However, the acceleration is lacking immensely. If you do happen to get hammered off the side of the track, the possibility of getting yourself going within seconds is very remote – as moving up to sixth gear seems to take a life time.

Although there is a variety of cars, there isn't any actual difference between them. For instance, you'd expect a formula one car to have a higher speed than an off-road truck.

You are also given a damage bar. This will inform you of how much damage your car has taken and how much it will take. If you happen to exceed this amount, you'll be thrusted back at the beginning again. You can damage your car in a number of ways, although trying to overtake is possibly the worst, so I suggest you try to avoid it – although not at pedestrian crossings. That always seems to inject a little excitement.



➤

of car which race on their own respective circuit. For instance, you won't find a Formula One tuned car racing on a dirt track. There are quite a few different styles of tracks, with around seven or eight mapped out differently. There are street, snow, dirt, and racing tracks which require various types of handling because of the conditions.

Before you take on a track, you can tune your car to suit the circuit. Obviously, if the next track to race is a slippery ice track, the idea is to spend money on handling and grip by purchasing the steering wheel and tyres. There is little point in purchasing a high-powered engine because you'll spend most of the time going far too fast and spinning out of control. You have to master the car-set-up screen before attempting a race or you will undoubtedly come nowhere.

The car sprites for top-down racing games are basically of a standard appearance. They are kept very simple because they have to be manipulated at every angle to make them smooth and fluent. Turbo Trax's sprites are simple, yet they work very effectively. There is no animation on the cars themselves because that would simply complicate the speed and definition.

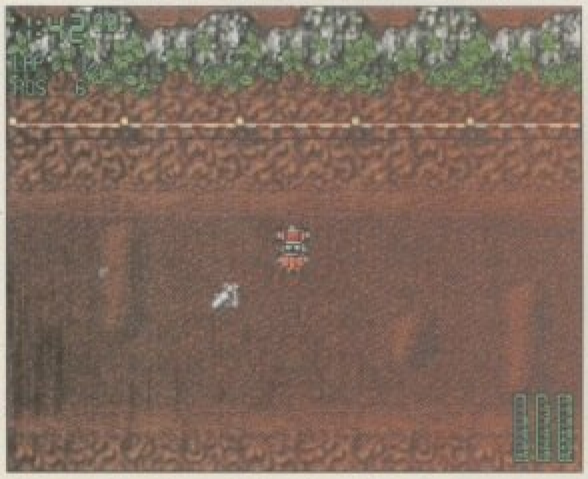
The tracks and backgrounds are good, making it pleasurable to play as well as being easy on the eye. There are different kinds of scenery to add enough variety to keep you playing for a while. There is a street track which is mapped out with cones – these must be negotiated along with the other five cars to complete the track. As Turbo Trax runs quite fast, it is difficult to see which bends and corners will be coming up. Memorising them won't work either because there are simply far too many of them to attempt. When you begin the arcade mode, a random one will be picked as well.

The computer opponents don't really give you much chance of catching them, never mind beating them. It will take many weeks of practice until you are good enough to challenge for first place.

Finally, the sound effects are very realistic with engine noises and the screeching of brakes. These all add to the excitement and action – although, not that much.

Final word

Overall, Turbo Trax is a fairly good game. It doesn't include anything special or mind-blowing, it's simply another top-down racing game – although the main point of the game is the fact it simply plays well and is quite enjoyable. The variety of tracks and cars gives it a longer lasting challenge as you have to adapt to each one. The graphics do their jobs adequately and it all adds up to a really playable game with many months of enjoyment.



Going over a turbo boost will give you that extra speed which is invaluable for keeping up with the rest of the pack



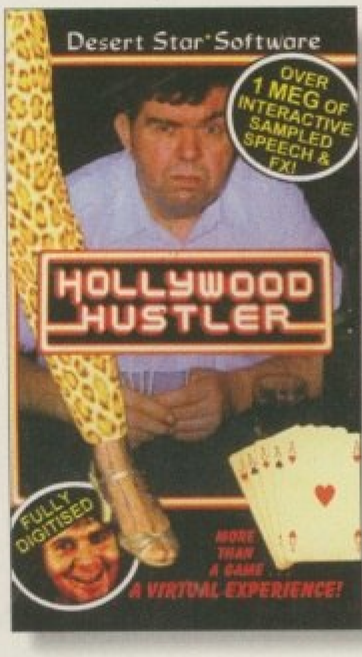
The starting grid is the best place to zoom into, at least, second place.



The Formula One set-up is far more involving than any other car/track combination

Hollywood Hustler

By Tina Hackett



The tasteful box cover looking like a cheesy '70's porno

Computer Poker is normally a genre reserved mainly for the PD pages or an excuse to show scantily clad bodies as in Strip Poker. But now new company, Desert Star Software, have taken the seedy underworld poker scene and incorporated it into a computer game. It looks like being a feminist's worst nightmare with gratuitous breast shots, fat old men farting, and it offers all other stereotypical traits of the gambler. Fortunately, it's all done tongue-in-cheek and the end product will probably be a combination of Rab C Nesbit and Leisure Suit Larry.

The story sets you as a bit of a loser, really. Well, to be kind, you've just been unlucky. You lose your job, your girlfriend leaves you, and your car gets repossessed, all in the same day. You are on the streets of Hollywood, alone, when you find yourself enticed into a dingy club and into a poker game.

You face three other rather dubious characters and can select the level of difficulty from Rookie, Average, or Hustler, depending on your skills. The rest is a straightforward Five Card Draw Poker game with all players placing their bets, and so on. Control is via the joystick and you play until you're broke.

The PR blurb accompanying the preview copy boasts over 1Mb of speech and FX, and so far



Two table options are available – this is the more decent of the two



The cinematic introduction tells the story – you are down on your luck, so you enter the club

farting(?), and a "Raise you five" uttered in an American accent by your opponents add to the seedy atmosphere.

And unlike other games of this kind, Hollywood Hustler promises to make each game completely different, with all cards being dealt at random. Each hand remains known only to the player holding them, so the computer can't actually cheat. The opponents' thinking also varies each time so, for instance, they may or may not bluff, or may be more aggressive.

A cinematic intro will also be used to create the feel of the game, and depending on how well you play, you will get one of three endings.

It certainly looks different and rather entertaining. Even the game box continues the tongue-in-cheek style looking like a cheap '70's porn film, and with the green baize trim you could almost be there!

> ' Gratuitous breast shots, fat **old men** farting and offering all other stereotypical traits of the gambler '



Happy, you leave the club wealthier but not a whole let wiser

Grim

Hollywood Hustler has a cinematic style and tries to provide a little more to it than just the card game, hence the reason for the characters which are in keeping with the style.

Montana Slim is the chef from the diner next door to the club and as you can guess by his name, as well as enjoying 'broads', and gambling, he's also into his food and booze in a big way. The others are Joe, an ex-sixties guru who is now the manager of the Pussycat porno-theatre, and Chuck, a would-be movie star and a night clerk at the motel. And lastly, there is Jackie, also known as Miss Astrodate, a stripper from the exotic cabaret bar. All sounds lovely, doesn't it?

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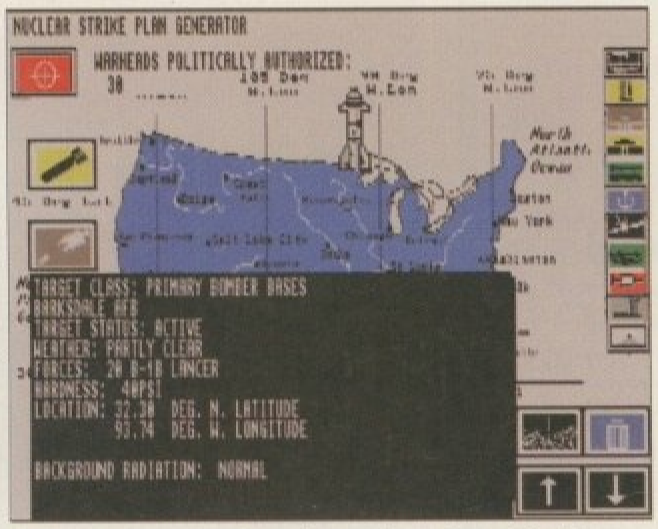
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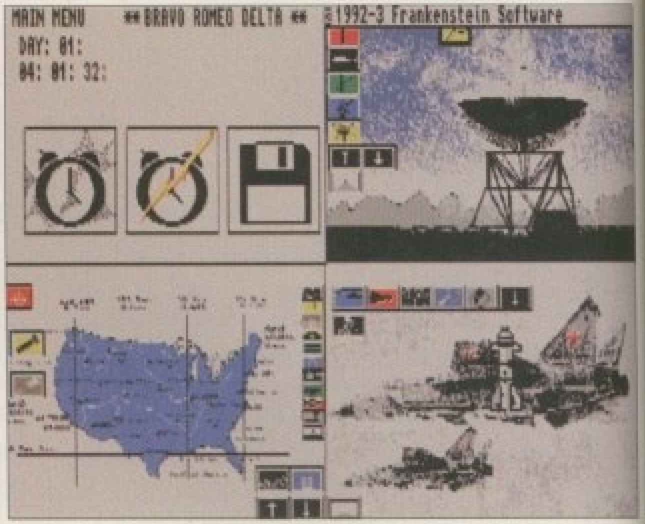
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There are a number of ways to set up attacks. Using planes and submarines are just a few



From here you can access all kind of menus which will lead you to set up your campaign

PUBLISHER	Guildhall Leisure
DEVELOPER	CDS
PRICE	£9.99
DISKS	2
HD INSTALL	Yes
SUPPORTS	All Amigas

Bravo Romeo Delta

Reviewed by Andy Maddock

CDS are a company who are quite well known among many Amiga owners for their previous war/strategy games. Their other titles include Action Stations, Blitzkrieg and White Death. Bravo Romeo Delta, their brand new game, has just been released and it includes all kinds of new strategic elements that differ from the first attempts.

Guildhall Leisure are set to release this before winter, along with their second release, Subversion, and both of them will set you back a mere £9.99. However, the question is, will they include enough tactical depth to keep you going through the coming winter months?

The idea behind the game is to take complete control of the US strategic forces which include ICBMs, SLBMs, SSBNs and Bomber Bases. There are a series of nuclear warheads aimed for the US Air Bases, and your job is one of responsibility – to launch a limited attack to prevent the warheads reaching their designated targets.

The main menu screen is divided into quarters, and each one takes you to another screen of attack assessments or nuclear strike plans – covering a different part of the game. Not being a nuclear/war/strategy fan I wasn't really looking forward to ploughing through menu after menu just looking for a way to fire some weapons. However, after loading it up I was quite impressed with the depth within Bravo Delta Romeo.

There's no doubt that the game was written by someone who has researched each part, studying it in great detail. They quite obviously know what they're talking about and seem to have achieved the right blend of strategy and tactics. The notorious problem that can occur with these strategy games is the fact that the programmer includes all sorts of nonsense that cannot be understood. Bravo Romeo Delta includes a manual that explains every part of the game. After a few minutes, you'll pick up all the strategy jargon and soon be processing attack waves.

I can fully understand if people turn their noses up at Bravo Romeo Delta – it's certainly not the most popular genre but it does appeal to a minority group which should be catered for.

Having said that, even the small minority may not be able to put up with the untidy and appalling graphics that are very difficult to see. Even the icons located on the left side of the screen are very blurred and have no graphical picture attached. You will have to check the manual a few times just to recap on which icon does what.

In terms of war and strategy, there are no other games that immediately spring to mind, so I think it's quite safe to say that Bravo Romeo Delta is the best of its genre – despite the odd graphical glitches here and there.

71%

From the command control display you can view your communication status and alter it



SubVersion

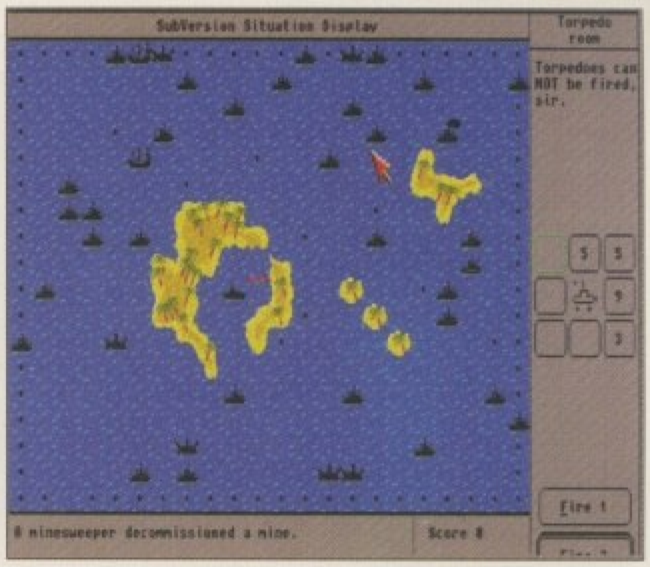
You are commander of the submarine 'Nautilus' and your mission objectives are to locate all enemy within the area and destroy them.

Subversion is the second release by Guildhall Leisure introducing the war/strategy approach, and is only slightly more arcadey than Bravo Romeo Delta. You are given a huge battlefield play area in the middle of the screen, and all the options are located around the edge of the screen. These range from firing torpedos to checking your status and looking for other subs in the vicinity.

The game is basically self-explanatory and a huge session with the manual isn't really required. All the menus and options are located at the top of the screen, making it very user-friendly. The only annoying factor that is bundled with the package is the code protection wheel. A series of numbers are presented to you and you must find the corresponding letters and match them with some more numbers on the reverse side. It would have been okay, but it takes a while before you finally work it out – especially with a case sensitive code wheel.

The main display in the centre of the screen displays areas of combat and locations of enemy ships, land and subs. Not only do you have to destroy enemy ships, but avoiding and destroying mines is pretty much a secondary mission objective.

The graphics are fairly simple, but there's more than enough depth and tactical gameplay – in fact, Subversion does become repetitive and boring after a while, because you happen to stumble upon the same attacks over and over again.



The map shows all the locations of then enemy. Make sure you choose a route that steers clear of mines

If you want a good, serious submarine simulation then I suggest you check out Sub War 2050. It has the same amount of tactics and gameplay as Subversion but the graphics stand out so much further. It's like an underwater flight sim and gives you an exciting role to play

As it stands, Subversion is an innovative idea with plenty of challenge to keep you going quite a while. If you can put up with the appalling graphics and the small minor gripe about the code wheel, then I can recommend Subversion only to submarine admirers.

68%

PUBLISHER
Guildhall Leisure

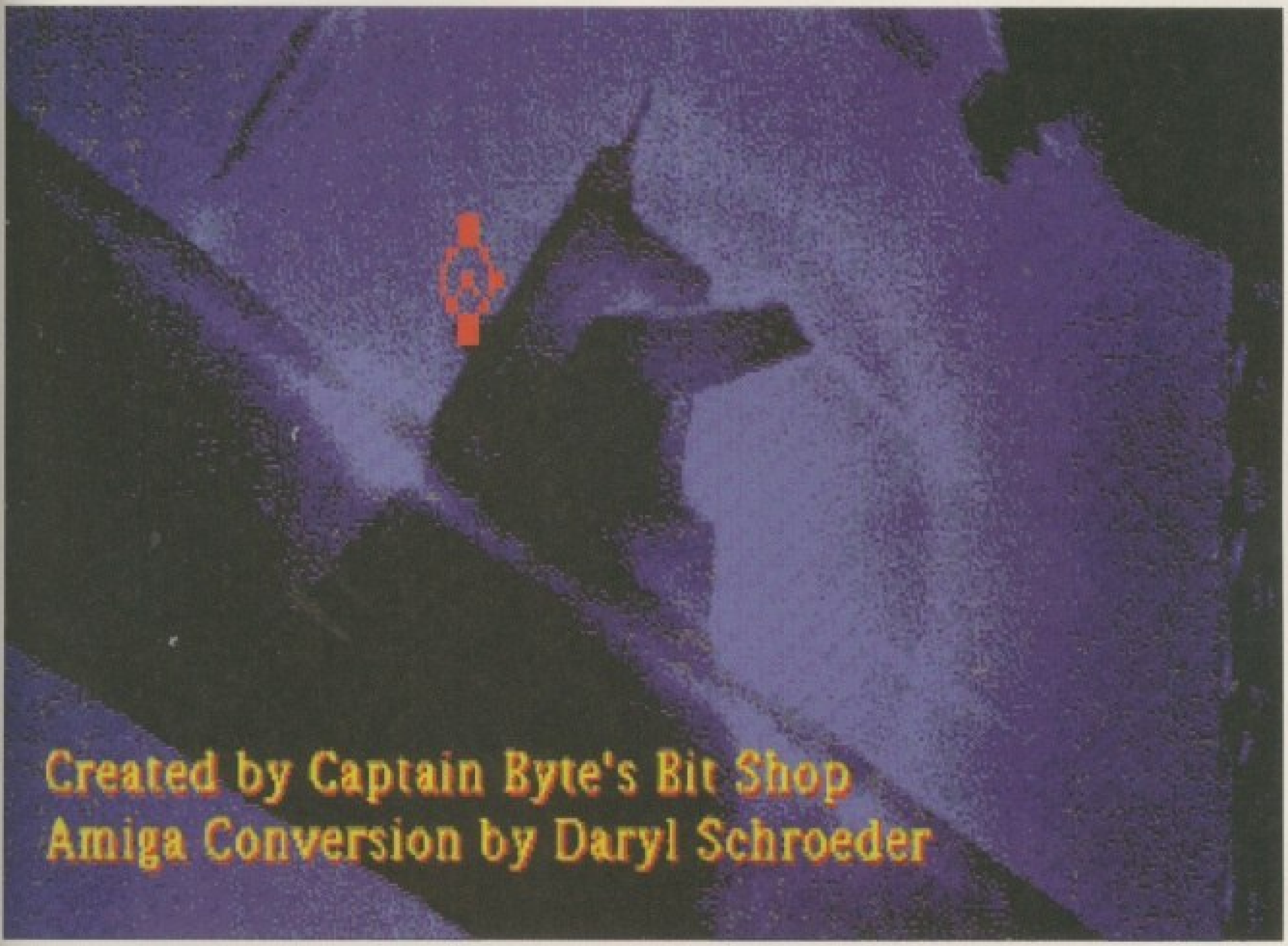
DEVELOPER
CDS

PRICE
£9.99

DISKS
1

HD INSTALL
Yes

SUPPORTS
All Amigas



Although SubVersion contains some nice introduction screens, the game itself is certainly not of a professional standard

hints & tips

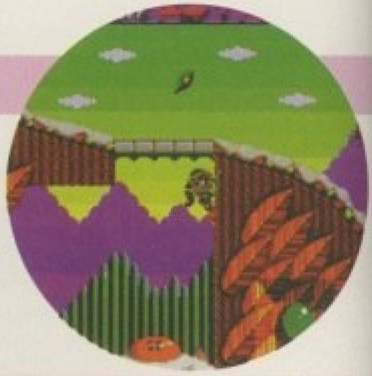
Jungle Strike

Stuck in this strategic blast? Try these level codes:

Return home	N7RL7JK3BPY
River raid	TG3TGDBR9C9
Training ground	96PBLHZJF4L
San Puloso city	VHJ94MC7JLN
Sub attack	RSMKVSPGC7X
Mountains	7CR94SPGC7V
Snow fortress	WPYV4F3BRG3
Night strike	XMCRLGFDY6G
End screen	LJ96YRWT7Y6



Zool



Level select: type GOLDFISH on the title screen, then F1 to F6 while playing!

Chaos Engine

If you still can't get anywhere in this game you're a bit sad really, but that's what we're for, eh? These codes will sort you out:

World 2 with infinite money	GVVCH5DMS7#N
World 3 with infinite money	V35O76X6S7WH
World 4 with infinite money	6UCDXU25S7V2

ATR (CD32)



Annoyed because you can't play those later tracks (like Space and Alien Planet) in two-player mode? Fret no more! All you have to do is reach them on one-player mode, lose a race, enter your name as ATR, then you can select them in two-player mode. Wahey!

Terminator 2

This game too hard for you? Skip over those levels by pausing the game, pressing F1 to F10, fire, then Esc.

Impossible Mission 2025

Top game! Top codes!

Level 1	ETQFJXXD	Level 4	FYQQPXEF
	EXQEJXDC		GCQCRXWB
Level 2	FBQDDXRE		GGQKTXVF
	FFQCVXIA	Level 5	GKQJYXDI
	FJQCHXOM		GOQJFXBK
Level 3	FNQAYXHI		GSQFDXZA
	FRQYCXVL		
	FUQTBXQE		

Zeewolf

Level codes! What a surprise!

Shark Fishing	IMAGO
Pal in dome	TIBUROW
Twenty angry men	ARGUS
Mind the hippos	MARTEN
Brass Rumblings	SOCKIN
Red airing	GANNPAY

Pointless but true: type in FRAMPAGE on the password screen to fly an ever-so-slightly superior plane instead of the old 'copter.



Top Gear 2

I've heard of annoyingly long and complicated level codes before, but this is ridiculous. It's bad enough for the gamesplayer, but I have to spend years checking them as well. AAAARGH!

One Player (sigh..)

Britain	)PN) +V$L PN13 47G%) 743HH
Canada	HLF6 8JHJ GBLV 23J+T MHG66
Egypt	)FB3 55#2 HNPB M3T5) 521FF
France	T65W 2B%Y $B4R M34DQ FB%11
Germany	HLF$ B2$R JNR$ 3M977 521FF
Greece	GPLC GLG$ MQTN %4HFF C+$WW
India	WNJB FHY6 %34V G9PMM JFD44
Ireland	51FS B#5L#FTR 8(RTT B$)VV
Italy	C1G+ C%DV G6 PC3Y3 JFD44
Japan	G9NF J22(P%RL $GM46 NJH77
Scandinavia	J2F$ BMLQ CQ%J)FL35 MHG66
South America	CG#4 7F6D YBHC T#+52 NJH77
Spain	$C82 5Q1T (MV9 84#1V HDC33
Switzerland	%7VM Q$5Y 2NPV %2TFB 743HH
USA	WQ%9)P6G HLM4 2QVYT GCB22

Two players (no, please, nooo)

Britain	6$BJ #D1$ HMMW 34L%V NJH77
Canada	L+G3 LCBQ 38QT 12H$R LGF55
Egypt	L2QB 59B2 N#91 C7N%T PLJ88
France	%VRC GRF4 5BDD)67MY TPN((
Germany	(CB5 PYLW QPP7 1QR$H D%+YY
Greece	273M $79M TB13 FFGMY D%+YY
India	4TN+ 3L%M GN67 LLMR4 JFD44
Ireland	(TP% 4)8B 3DLB JT948 PLJ88
Italy	LBWP R1%# 1(L4 LH1GF#76MM
Japan	(T94 6TC2 #2T(TBP(# 1VT%%
Scandinavia	6Q83 563N ¢LSM #T7ML +(#RR
South America	T572 4T19 B6#1 G7C21 MHG66
Spain	95T2 4HY# LDSW D5%YW JFD44
Switzerland	NWJR VC29 3+GF 6N3GF#76MM
USA	82NW 14HF QLQF 6N3GF#76MM

Get-out clauses

Stuck on a particular game? Martin Shenton (our resident work experience lad) helps you out of your pit of despair

Alien Breed

Press CAPS LOCK on the player select screen and it's extra lives ahoy!

Alien Breed

Let's face it – this game is hard. Don't panic:

Level 2	353828
Level 3	108383
Level 4	L370101
Level 5	982822
Level 6	847464
Level 7	737373
Level 8	928122
Level 9	267364
Level 10	193831
Level 11	090921
Level 12	309838
Level 13	101221
Level 14	103992
Level 15	998112
Level 16	125332
Level 17	091233

K240

Type these on the main view screen then press return;

ICBM	get four of every satellite and missile! Wow!
SKYSCRAPER	cuts down that construction time
LOADSADOSH	hmm...I wonder what this one does...
TELESCOPE	shows all the asteroids
LEMING	adds 50 to the population
ICEMAN	stops all the asteroids, literally!



Robocop 3

Hold down right shift and type THE DIDDY MEN in the game to become invincible. After this you can press Esc to skip to the next level.

Beavers

When this cheeky little game begins, type BIGBIG-BIGB and you can skip levels by pressing F2.

Mr Blobby

Why Millennium thought they needed that fat pink blob of pure evil to promote this perfectly good game is beyond me, but here are the codes if you need them:

Level 1	BABE
Level 2	OOAH
Level 3	DAKD
Level 4	EMEA
Level 5	FLAF
Level 6	GGAK
Level 7	HAAJ
Level 8	BAJM
Level 9	DASL
Level 10	FTAN
Level 11	GOAS
Level 12	AAOB
Level 13	OOBI
Level 14	DBLD
Level 15	ENEB
Level 16	FMBF
Level 17	GGBL
Level 18	ALKB
Level 19	BBJN
Level 20	OKBQ
Level 21	DBTL
Level 22	EVMB
Level 23	GOBT
Level 24	AADO
Level 25	OOOJ
Level 26	DOMB
Level 27	EOEO
Level 28	FNOF
Level 29	HOHL
Level 30	BOJO
Level 31	DOUL
Level 32	EWMO
Level 33	GOOU
Level 34	HOPT
Level 35	AAED
Level 36	BDBH
Level 37	OODK
Level 38	FODFHDHM
Level 39	BDJP
Level 40	DDVL
Level 41	EXMD

Virtual Karting

By Tina Hackett

OTM are a new company to the Amiga market and unfortunately their first game, Touring Car Challenge, left a black mark against their name, receiving pitiful review scores. However, their forthcoming release, Virtual Karting, looks likely to redeem their reputation and unlike most of today's rather predictable race-'em-ups, this title takes the form of a Go-Kart racing game.

Virtual Karting is fully texture mapped and aims for this latest 'virtual' style. Two views are available – a 2D overhead angle where you can zoom in or out, or a 'behind the kart' 3D angle. Both work pretty well so far and the 3D angle gives a good impression of speed, whereas the 2D overhead gives more of a tactical style of game.

There are three tracks available, one is the simple figure of eight style, another a taxing windy track, and the last one is for the experts only because as well as hairpin bends and sharp corners, you are in danger of falling into the water surrounding most of the track. Overall, three tracks do sound quite limiting, but OTM are promising update disks at a later date. Another limitation could be that it doesn't have a two-player head-to-head mode but even so, it still seems like a fun game that looks original.

The gameplay feels very responsive at this stage and is easy to control. Game speed depends on your machine, and with a standard A1200 you can expect 25 frames per second. However, with an accelerator you can double this to 50 frames per second.

Sound effects are also fairly realistic and are close to the real thing, and a quite acceptable intro tune gives quite a polished feel. What also looks nice is a 'Fly-by' helicopter preview of the tracks.

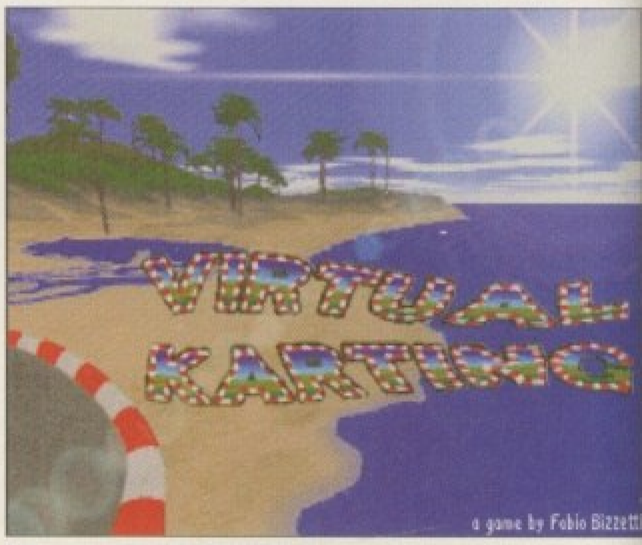
Control of the game is either by digital joystick, mouse, or analog joystick. The player can also choose whether to race in a 100cc kart or 125cc, and manual or automatic gears are also user-definable.

Unfortunately, the screenshots don't do the preview much justice. Due to the graphics mode they don't grab all that well, but they'll give you some sort of an idea anyway. The game is AGA only and is due for release this month.

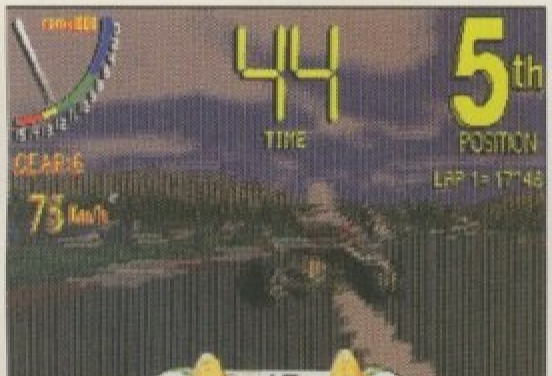
> 'Virtual Karting is fully **texture mapped** and aims for this latest **'virtual'** style'



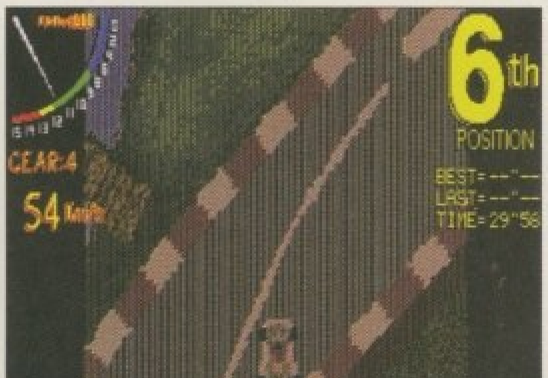
Options are quite generous although there is no head-to-head mode at this stage



Virtual Karting already looks quite professionally presented



A 3D view will give an impressive feeling of speed



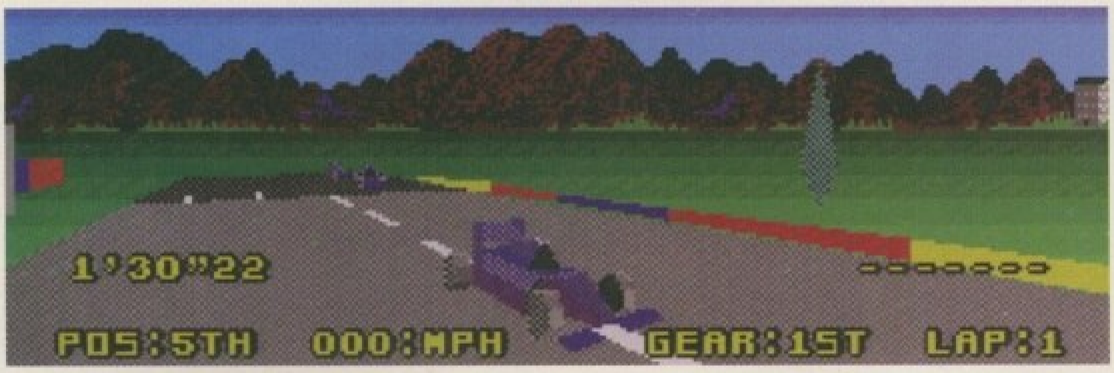
With the overhead mode you can zoom in or out

In the future

We are going to be seeing a lot more of OTM in the near future. Planned for late '95 is Starfighter, a 'ground breaking' shoot-'em-up. League Monitor is also in development and is a football application package which allows the user – either home user or professional club – to enter data. Features include full league tables, form guide, and results prediction. On the more serious side they are about to release PowerBase v3.5, their Amiga database package.

Leading lap

By Andy Maddock



The polygon graphics that feature in the external views are looking quite spectacular

Since the success of Geoff Crammond's Formula One Grand Prix, Amiga owners have been crying out for a sequel. Unfortunately, it was announced it will only be developed exclusively for the PC. Now, a company willing to take on the challenge of creating a similar version are Kellion Software – a new company whose debut game is looking mightily impressive.

Leading Lap has been in development since December of last year. Almost 12 months have passed and hopefully they will have studied the competition and plan to try and attract the Christmas crowds as well as having the premium arcade racing game, stealing the crown from MicroProse.

You can see from the screenshots that Leading Lap looks like a jigsaw – put together by pieces of other racing games. Formula One Grand Prix, Hard Drivin' and Sega's arcade, Virtua Racing, all seem to make some kind of appearance, graphically.

However, the plot behind Leading Lap strays from these three. The idea is to race around many different European countries and gather enough points to top a league containing five other drivers. The drivers will have their own particular personalities and characteristics so obviously, there will be many budding computer-like Michael Schumachers out there.

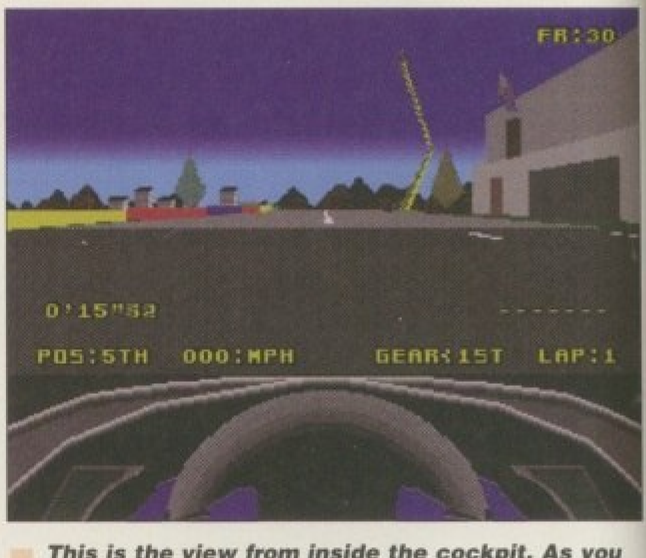
There will be three areas to race around, namely the racing, country and city tracks, as well as three different cars – formula one, rally and endurance – and each one is graphically different from the previous.

The polygon graphics are looking particularly spectacular, and there is an option to change the detail from trees and bridges to large buildings.

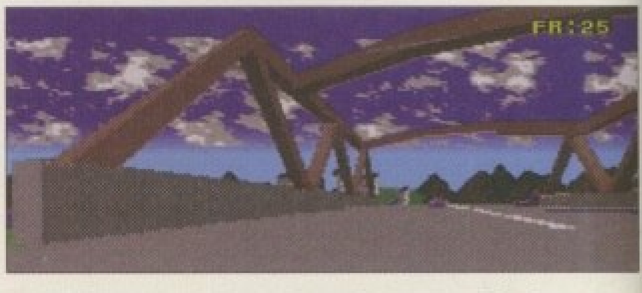
> ‘ race around many different **European countries** and gather enough points to **top a league** containing five other drivers ’

You will also be able to set the angle at which the external view is observed. This enables you to change the view by the press of a button to see who is around you, whereas in Formula One Grand Prix, to see who is behind and in front you have to toggle the views awkwardly, and eventually you'd lose control of your own car. This option is present too, but it works far better.

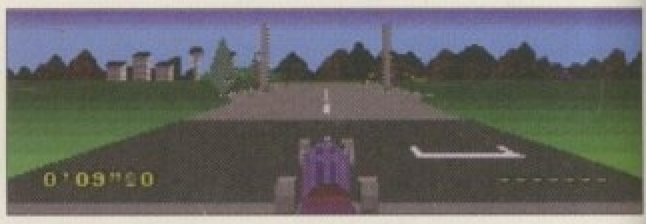
In Formula One Grand Prix, there are three different angles from which you can view the action. With Leading Lap there are more. You can view from inside the cockpit to anything up to a zoomed out view – much like Sega's arcade Virtua Racing. This particular arcade boasted all these angles and, surprisingly, Leading Lap is shaping up to look like a close Amiga version.



This is the view from inside the cockpit. As you can see, it's very similar to MicroProse F1GP



This screenshot proves what a graphical feast Leading Lap is going to be



The background scenery is looking quite varied with many trackside objects which hopefully won't slow the action down

Final word

Another surprising aspect is the speed. It is probably one of the fastest games I have witnessed in this genre. Usually, to make a racing game fast the graphics are often sacrificed. Leading Lap contains high detailed background screens, while still managing to keep the speed at a realistic rate.

There are still a few tweaks that need to be made here and there, but so far, Kellion Software could present an offer that MicroProse Formula One Grand Prix fanatics just can't refuse.

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Magic labels

Amiga Medical Part 10



Frank Nord peruses some nifty labels in addition to the sage advice he dispenses

I don't know if you remember them, but there used to be these Magic Drawing tablets – they may still exist for all I know. You could write and draw on them with the supplied stylus, your fingernail or a twig – anything remotely pointy really. But the really groovy thing about them was the fact that once you had covered the entire area of the tablet, you could simply pull this integral slider across the surface of the tablet leaving you with a pristine surface on which to draw once more.

How does this relate to anything Amiga-based? Has someone developed a similar method for clearing the screen in DPaint? Well no. It's a bit more mundane than that. The Magic Drawing Tablet approach has been appropriated by a manufacturer called Re Mark It for their range of disk, video and message labels. You can write on the blue-ish part of the label using your fingernail or a twig or whatever, then, when you want to clear the message, you can put your finger on the green arrow (the green activator arrow according to the literature) to the left of the label and slide your finger across it to clear the label.



Now that's magic he says in his best Paul Daniels voice

The disk and video labels also have a permanent section on them for you to make your mark on for posterity, and the message labels come in two varieties – a two line variant and a four line version. The disk labels come ten to a packet for £2.49, you get five video labels for the same price, and the small messages labels are £1.99 for four – the big message labels are slightly more expensive at £1.99 for only two. If you are interested in these, and I'm sure you are, then get in contact with the First Computer Centre on 0113 2319444 immediately to place your order..

Wasting space

So, onto other business. I think that this month I should tell you how to get rid of stuff, rather than putting new stuff onto your machine. So we will start with unwanted assigns. You know how you have a drawer assigned and you want to get rid of it, but AmigaDOS brings up an alert saying "Cannot delete blahdiblah, object is in use." Well, if you hit the Shell you can usually get rid of assigns by typing the assign name followed by dismount or remove, i.e.:

```
assign blahdiblah: remove
```

This will usually let you delete the offending directory. Use the Dismount option if it's a device you are trying to get rid of rather than an assign. Alternatively, if you have the assign made in your user-startup script, you can always remove it from there and then reboot. Assigns aren't usually too problematic to get rid of, but there are other items that might chew up memory that you would do well to sort out.

The most important of these is undoubtedly your ENVARC: directory. Numerous programs use ENV: to store settings and preferences, programs that you might no longer use. The only way to make sure you aren't wasting valuable system resources is to trawl through ENVARC: periodically to check for offending items.

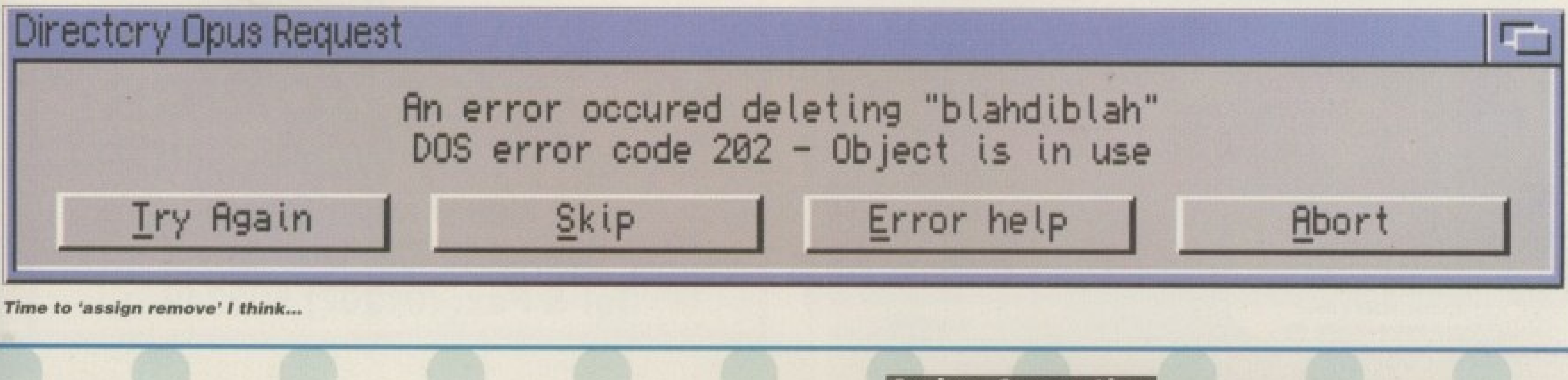
If you are using a file manager like DOpus or Diskmaster you can easily get to envarc: by bringing up an assigns list. If you don't have a suitable file management program, you can do the same stuff by opening a shell window and cd'ing to ENVARC:. If shell frightens you, then the last method of getting there is to go into your prefs drawers on your boot disk (usually called DH0:, HD0: or Workbench:) and have a look for a drawer called env-archive. This probably won't have an icon so you'll need to show all files from the Window menu on Workbench first.

Anyway, by whatever method you reach it you should eventually find yourself within the ENVARC: drawer. The only files that are really important in ENVARC: are contained within the sys drawer, but that doesn't mean you can go deleting all the other files willy nilly. The files in the Sys drawer are all your Workbench preference settings, like the font your Workbench screen uses, its resolution, number of colours, etc.

This is very useful to know if you make a mistake and save something in Prefs that you can't use – for instance a DBLPAL screenmode on a 1084 monitor. If you have done that then the best you can hope for is a black screen, but you might damage your monitor. The thing to do is to boot without a startup-sequence and cd to sys:prefs/env-archive/sys and delete the file screenmode.prefs. Then you can happily reboot once more, safe in the knowledge that your Workbench will boot in four colours on a PAL Hi-res screen which will be happily displayed on your 1084.

Sometimes the preferences stores in ENVARC: are held within their own drawers inside ENVARC: – this makes it really easy to see what you are doing. If this isn't the case, you can always move the questionable files elsewhere and reboot to see if the files are required by any of the programs currently running on your machine.

Obviously, you will need to run the programs you have on your drive to be able to check whether the files you have moved are needed.



Time to 'assign remove' I think...

Cover version

Amiga 3D Part 7



Ben Vost talks us through a recent commission

My good friend Errol at EMComputergraphic approached me a while ago and asked if I could produce some cover artwork for his upcoming CD-ROM release. I agreed and he sent me some sketches of what he thought would be nice. I played around with the concepts he gave me and decided that LightWave would probably prove the best solution for the building blocks of the final image.

The initial text 'Phase 1' was the first thing to deal with. LightWave actually provides good facilities for converting PostScript type 1 typefaces into 3D objects, albeit not quite as nice as Imagine's for a change, so rather than having to build the text from scratch I simply loaded the appropriate font (Jupiter from the Safari Fonts collection that EMC sells) and extruded it.

I decided to bevel the text as it looked a bit bland and flat. At this point I checked with Errol to see what he wanted in terms of texturing for the text, and surprisingly, he went for my first choice which I had merely selected for a test render. All this was was a slightly glossy red for the front, the sample texture Bumpy Chrome with the bump map removed for the bevel, and the sample texture Gradient for the sides of the letters.

I did several test renders of the text at different angles, but decided it still looked too flat, so I changed the focal length of the lens to distort the end result a bit more. Errol didn't like the jaunty angle I first put the text at, so we settled on the flat front, but tipped back style that graces the cover now.



Caption required

For the background, which was rendered separately, I set up a scene using the random stars object which comes with LightWave, a pair of lights (one to provide a fill, the second for the lens flare) and some objects. These objects were based upon the content of the CD-ROM and consisted of several pictures and objects made from fonts.

RATIOS AND EFFECTS

To retain the aspect ratio of the pictures, I made their object the same size in centimetres as the pictures were in pixels. I distorted the lens for the camera once more, although not to the same extent I had used for the text, and shifted the camera back a bit. To get the stretched out star effect, I turned on particle blur and gave it a high percentage, then I jumped to frame five and moved the camera back towards the centre of the scene. At the same time I brought the text and picture objects out from the centre to see if motion blur would look nice. Unfortunately, motion blur looked anything but nice, but the particle blur seemed to work really nicely.

I composited the Phase 1 text onto a Lo-res preview of the background so that Errol could get some idea of what I was trying to do. He liked the base idea but suggested some improvements, including a couple of flying CDs to go onto the cover to ram home the point of the artwork. So I re-rendered. Eventually, through trial and error, we came to agree how the end result would look.

Now that I had completed the building blocks for the image, I rendered them once more, this time at a higher resolution. Because a CD cover isn't all that large, I only rendered the images at 'high' resolution, rather than 'print.' This obviously took a lot less time to render, hopefully without showing in the final print. I ended up with an image that was about a thousand pixels square for the background.

I had done the early compositing in ADPro, which was fine for the purpose at that level, but for the final artwork I decided to fire up Shapeshifter and use Photoshop on the Mac. Photoshop is what ImageF/X should, and perhaps will, be. The most important feature for me was Photoshop's facility for multiple, independent layers in the same picture. This meant I could have separate, discrete elements, like the Phase 1 logo, the normal text that appears on the cover, the background, and the glow as individually editable pictures.

This allowed me to play around with scaling the Phase 1 logo and its placement on the background, without needing to keep reloading the picture. I also resorted to using Quark XPress for the layout of the CD on the page because PageStream **still** cannot print separations (a really serious fault for a professional DTP package, I kid you not).

So there you have it. From original sketch to completed image in less than a page. I only wish it was as painless a process to create the image as it was to write about it. That having been said, I did have a lot of fun doing the work and if you wish to see the end result, I can only suggest you boost EMCs coffers and buy the CD for yourself.



Caption required

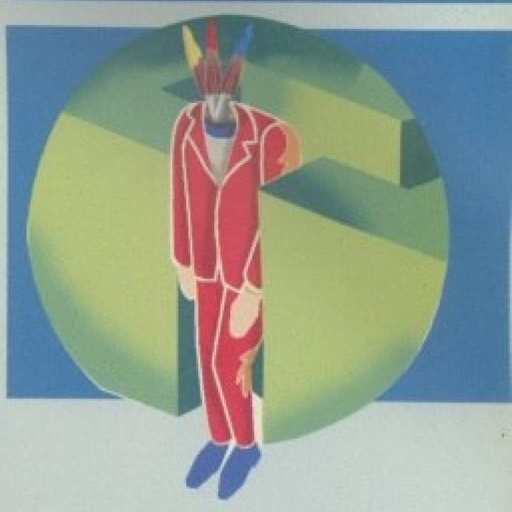
Things to note

Looking back at the image I produced, there are certainly some things I would try if I had had the time (and might attempt for Phase 2, 3, etc. if Errol lets me). Firstly, I probably wouldn't make the cover a space theme again. Everybody uses the same sort of imagery, and lens flares are getting so clichéd these days. The second thing is that I might have relied more on Photoshop to speed up the rendering process. Motion blurs, lens flares and lighting effects are all easy to achieve in Photoshop and take a lot less time than the effects rendered by LightWave.

Having said that, I wasn't overly hampered by a deadline for this commission, so I didn't need to save time. Lastly, it pays to try and extend your software collection. Had I only been able to use LightWave and ADPro for this cover image, it would have been a lot more bland than it currently is.

A splash of paint

Amiga 2D Part 1



Steve White explains how you can join the artistic masterclass and improve your desktop graphics techniques

The aim of this tutorial is to help you get the most out of your paint package and as a result, show you how to design great pictures and animation.

I will be demonstrating how you can create realistic looking backgrounds – including natural backgrounds, choosing the correct colours and spreads, preliminary design techniques, brush manipulation, special effects, animation techniques and much more.

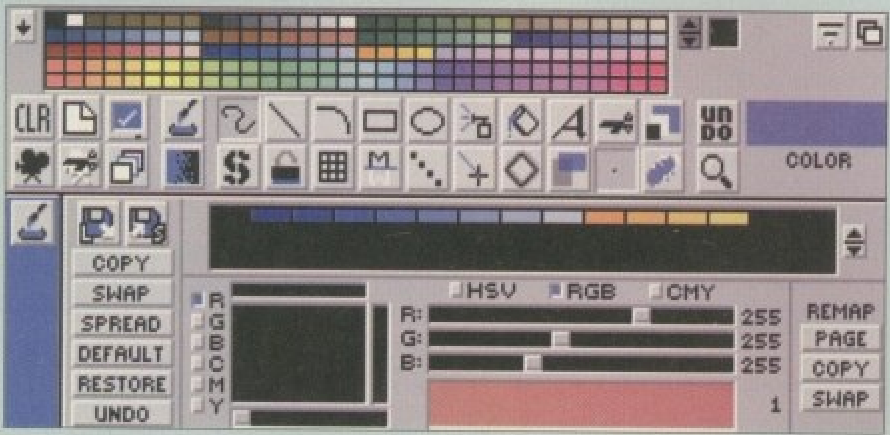
Although most of the screenshots in this tutorial are taken from Brilliance 2.0, the subjects covered will also apply to those of you with Deluxe Paint or Personal Paint. I have used terminology employed across all these packages so you can find the appropriate reference in the manual.

ROUGH SKETCH

The first step when designing any computer-oriented artwork is to make sure you have a rough on paper from which to work from. By designing on paper first, you can easily correct and enhance your scene without wasting precious time in your paint package.

When you are happy with your design, you should write down what colours you will need and any spreads that may be required. A spread is a range of colours blended between a start colour and end colour. You may want to create a spread of greys, in which case you simply select your start colour (black probably), select Spread, and then click on the end colour (white). Your paint package will automatically fill in the slots between start and end with the appropriate colours.

Obviously, those of you with AGA machines will be able to create more extensive spreads, allowing for smoother transitions between colours. However, more colours invariably means more work, although the finished artwork will look better than a 16 or 32 colour image.



Creating the right colours is the first step in any graphics venture. Use them wisely or suffer the consequences

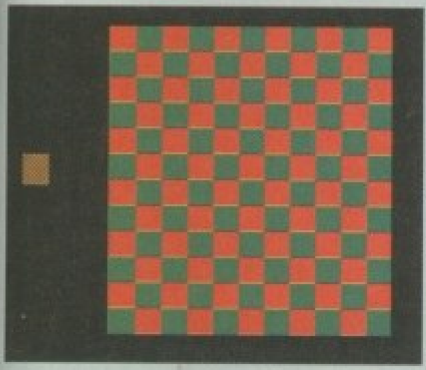
COLOUR SELECTION

For those of you with non-AGA machines, the task of colour selection is a more difficult one and you may find your scene doesn't lend itself too well to 16 or 32 colours. If you also require spreads, you may even have to consider HAM (Hold And Modify) mode which is extremely slow in Deluxe Paint.

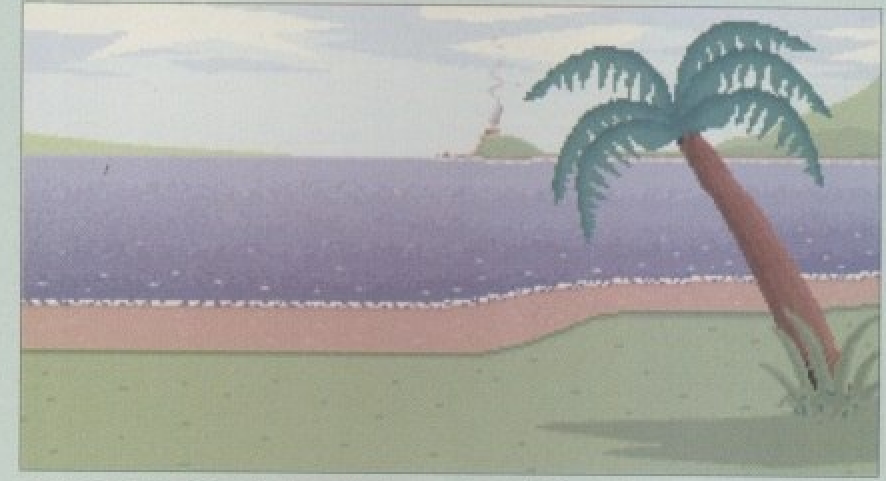
Remember that it is the foreground elements of your design that are of most importance – a background can easily be covered by just a single colour, two at the most.

One way to falsely create colour transitions (spreads) is to use dithering. Dithering works by creating a chess board pattern made up of two colours. Due to the resolution, the effect fools the eye into thinking its seeing a new colour. If you dithered red and white it would look like pink, green and red appears as brown. If you don't own an AGA machine it may be a worthwhile exercise to actually create an image with different colour dithering to see which combinations work best. When you think you've got your palette right, save it out.

Although it's tempting to start your design with the foreground, the best place to start is the background. The background is invariably the simplest element in design and can act as an incentive to finish the picture off (one of the toughest disciplines in computer-design is patience). It also acts as an excellent reference for your foreground elements and you may even find better positioning than you originally anticipated.



By using dithering techniques you can build a third colour from two other colours and ease the strain on your palette



There are two styles of natural background – realistic and cartoon. Whichever you choose, they both dictate the style of foreground graphics

Don't go spare

One of the most useful tools in any paint package is a Spare page, normally accessed with the J key. While designing backgrounds you can use the spare page to test different effects before applying them to the work page. In fact, the spare page proves such an invaluable page that I regularly save mine so that useful bits and pieces can be retrieved whenever I need them.

The real world

Probably the most frightening type of background is a natural one. The sea, land, rock, sky, desert and snow are all natural backgrounds that make artists cringe. The problem with natural backgrounds is that critics won't allow for mistakes. If it's the inside of a spaceship or building you made up it doesn't matter what people say, because it's your creation.

There are two ways to design natural backgrounds and both work equally well. You can go for the realistic design in which you attempt to accurately recreate the background as much as possible, or opt for the more cartoon look, using less colours and taking less time.

If done correctly, both look impressive, but you must remember that they also dictate the foreground style to some degree. If you create a complex background with many colours then you'll probably have to do the same with the foreground elements. Therefore, for those of you with non-AGA machines it may prove a sound decision opting for the cartoon-style background.

In the next issue I will be explaining in detail how to go about designing natural backgrounds – both realistic and cartoon. I'll also be taking a look at Gradients and how they can speed up the background process.

How to expose yourself!

That got your attention didn't it! Of course, what Paul Overaa is talking about this month is ARexx stem variable exposure, but you knew that didn't you

This month I'm adding the finishing touches to the skeleton form-fill script we've been working on in recent issues and tackling the last remaining problem area, namely the need to define identical 'pseudo-constant' terms in any procedure that uses them.

Defining an ARexx function as a procedure is, for the most part, a good thing to do because variables and data used within that function then become local to the function (so cannot be modified by anything that happens in other areas of the code). In short, the function gets its own 'execution environment' and, as scripts get larger, this procedural isolation becomes increasingly important.

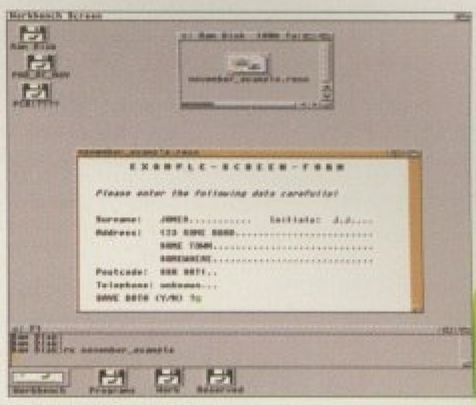
The difficulty, you may remember, is that there are times when you'd actually like to have a few items of data shared between routines that have been marked as procedures, and this is particularly so with variables that have been set up to provide static, i.e. pseudo-constant, data. Listing 1, for example, shows two of the routines from last month's code which both require their own CSI (control sequence introducer) variable definition.

As far as ease of maintenance etc., is concerned, it would, of course, be far better if that CSI definition existed in just one place in the program! One solution to this dilemma would be to define such items at the start of the program and then pass the required variables as function parameters. This approach is fine if you've only got one or two terms that may need to be shared, but it would get very cumbersome if many items were involved.

As you probably know, ARexx provides an 'Expose' keyword which provides another pathway for making particular variables 'visible' to a procedure. My approach for making static variable definitions available to a procedure is based on this keyword, but it's not just a matter of explicitly exposing each of the variable names in turn – it involves the use of ARexx's compound variables.

By defining a suitable stem and using this as the basis for all static definitions, all that needs to be done to make the whole set of pseudo-constant variables 'visible' to a procedure is to make the stem itself visible using a single 'Expose' declaration. I tend to use the stem name 'g.' (g for 'global') for these types of applications, and listing 2 shows the set of constant terms you'll find in this month's CoverDisk example. You'll notice, when you compare this month's code to that given in the October issue, that this technique slightly reduces the size of the procedures. This, however, is not where the real benefit lies. The real advantage is that we end up with all pseudo-constant definitions defined in just one place within the source, but eliminate the need to pass or expose lots of individual variables.

Stem exposure is then an extremely useful method for making suitably defined data sets available to a procedure. Another change made in this month's example code (you'll find the full script on the CoverDisk) is that the DisplayForm(), ClearForm(), ReadForm() and SaveData() functions have now also been rewritten as procedures, and you'll notice that I've been able to make the whole set of field definitions available to these procedures by just exposing the f. stem.



The display may look the same but underneath the surface some significant code changes have been made



```
CursorWrite: Procedure
parse arg window,r,c,text$
CSI = '9b'x
call Writech(window,CSI||r||'3B'x||c||'48'x)
call Writech(window,text$)
return

ShowInputField: Procedure
parse arg window,r,c,count
CSI         = '9b'x
call Writech(window,CSI||r||'3B'x||c||'48'x) /* position cursor */
call Writech(window,Copies('.',count))
return
```

Listing 1: Because these two routines have been created as procedures they both need their own CSI pseudo-constant definition

```
g.TRUE              = 1
g.FALSE             = 0
g.CR                = '0D'x
g.BACKSPACE         = '08'x
g.SPACE             = '20'x
g.APPROX            = '7E'x
g.ESC               = '1B'x
g.CSI               = '9b'x
g.BACKGROUND        = g.CSI||'3e'x||'32'x||'6d'x
g.CELL_COLOUR       = g.CSI||'34'x||'32'x||'6d'x
g.INVERSE_ON        = g.CSI||'37'x||'6d'x            /* inverse video style command */
g.INVERSE_OFF       = g.CSI||'32'x||'37'x||'6d'x     /* inverse off command */
g.ITALIC_ON         = g.CSI||'33'x||'6d'x            /* italic text style command */
g.ITALIC_OFF        = g.CSI||'32'x||'33'x||'6d'x     /* italic off command */
g.BOLD_ON           = g.CSI||'31'x||'6d'x            /* bold text style command */
g.BOLD_OFF          = g.CSI||'32'x||'32'x||'6d'x     /* bold off command */
g.UNDERSCORE_ON     = g.CSI||'34'x||'6d'x            /* underscore text style command */
g.UNDERSCORE_OFF    = g.CSI||'32'x||'34'X||'6d'x     /* underscore off command */
g.SCREEN_PROMPT1    = g.BOLD_ON||'E X A M P L E - S C R E E N - F O R M'||g.BOLD_OFF
g.SCREEN_PROMPT2    = g.ITALIC_ON||'Please enter the following data carefully!'||g.ITALIC_OFF
g.SCREEN_PROMPT3    = 'SAVE DATA (Y/N) ?'
g.SCREEN_PROMPT4    = 'DO YOU WISH TO ENTER MORE DATA (Y/N) ?'
g.SCREEN_PROMPT5    = '                '
```

Listing 2: The example program's static variable data set in its new stem based form

```
CursorWrite: Procedure expose g.
parse arg window,r,c,text$
call Writech(window,g.CSI||r||'3B'x||c||'48'x)
call Writech(window,text$)
return

ShowInputField: Procedure expose g.
parse arg window,r,c,count
call Writech(window,g.CSI||r||'3B'x||c||'48'x) /* position cursor */
call Writech(window,Copies('.',count))
return
```

Listing 3: The modified versions of the routines shown in listing 1

Coming soon

With the front-end form display code now complete, it is possible to envisage a number of uses for the routines we've developed. A questionnaire program or simple flat-file database utility are two applications that come to mind and, in a few months time, I'll be returning to the script we've built over the last few issues to explain how things like random access file handling facilities can be added.

For the immediate future, however, I suspect it is probably best if we allow some time for the quite complex ideas of recent instalments to settle for a while. Next month, therefore, I've got something totally different for you – a way of using a fully-fledged ASL file requester in your ARexx scripts with just a single line of code. Trust me – it's an issue that you must not miss!

Take me to your header

Phil South goes over the topic of search engines and why you should use one or more of them



The Internet is big. I don't really mean big, I mean BIG! It's got millions of files, it has millions of users. It has millions of home pages. How the blazing flip are you going to home in on the pages which take your interest if you can't find them. It's not so much like a needle in a haystack as a needle in a needle factory.

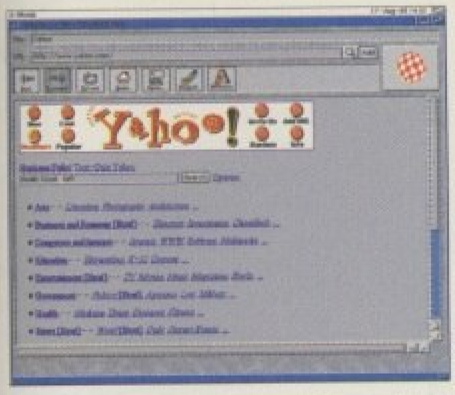
Fortunately, we have a little bit of technology on our side. Search servers, or search engines as they are sometimes called, take all the hard slog out of finding a link you are looking for. Want to find out all the Star Trek sites? Just type STAR TREK into a search engine and about 15 seconds later you have a hotlist of sites catering to the trekker tastes. Want all the sites about UFOs? Type UFO and you'll have more pictures and text about UFOs than Fox Mulder has in his downstairs privy. If you need anything on the Internet, a search engine is your man.

Most of the original search engines started out as lists of sites, just classified lists which enabled you to scroll through topics and pick off the ones which took your fancy. Now the Web has grown a thousand-fold since then and those old lists and lists of lists have grown a little bit long in the tooth. What was needed was a way to search the lists and give the user a sorted list of those entries only containing the keywords. This was possible using scripts which can generate HTML pages and squirt them to you at your browser, so sites like Yahoo and Lycos were born.

As the months go by, almost every list-based system has now moved over to a search engine, so you can pretty much guarantee that if a site exists, you will be able to find it within about 15 minutes of goofing about with search engines. In the old days it could have taken days.

So off you go to Search Engine Space and report back if you find any nice loony sites. I want to have a crazy site corner, and I'm looking for sites which make you laugh, cry, sick, make your hair stand on end, in fact make you do anything except go someplace else. Send your URLs to: Phil South, Comms Column, Amiga Computing, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Look forward to hearing from you.

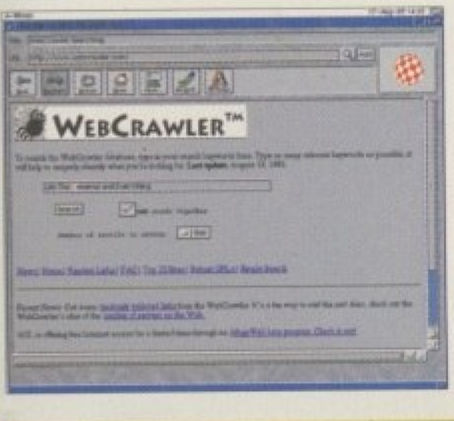
Some good starting points



Yahoo – this is the fun one, and it has a lot of very cool links, as well as some very good serious ones. This should be your first stop, and if you get fed up with not being able to find what you want, then try some of the others.
http://www.yahoo.com/

Lycos – this is the big one, and I'm not talking about the Texas sale. The files here are huge, in fact they have a small one for people who haven't got all day, but the large one is the best for Wide Area searches.
http://www.lycos.com/

WebCrawler – a nicely laid out search engine, and some good features to steer you to the subject of your choice.
http://www.webcrawler.com/





Submit It! – if you need to publicise your own pages, then this is the place to do it, as it has automatic connections to almost every search engine on the planet. It is also a good source for finding out which search engines there are and where they hide. It's like a search engine for search engines. (Damn that's confusing...)
http://submit-it.permalink.com/submit-it/

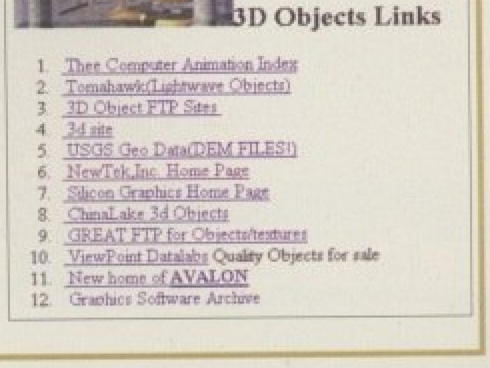
Aminet – this is the best way into Aminet. The FTP route into WUArchive is always full, but the Web access is usually open. Either try this one or the German site, sometimes access is quicker to the European mirror.
http://wuarchive.wustl.edu/~aminet
or
http://www.uni-paderborn.de/aminet

Imperial College – the Premier UK FTP site, being a mirror of the Sunsite network, so if you have any other machines like Macs or PCs hanging about (or indeed hungry emulators needing software) this is where you can fill your boots with more software than anyone usefully needs.
ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk

ArchiePlex – this is an HTTP version of the Archie server, an old Internet thang which used to be the best way to search for files. This is a better way, but using similar technology. If you can't find a file then this is the one for you.
http://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/archieplexform.html

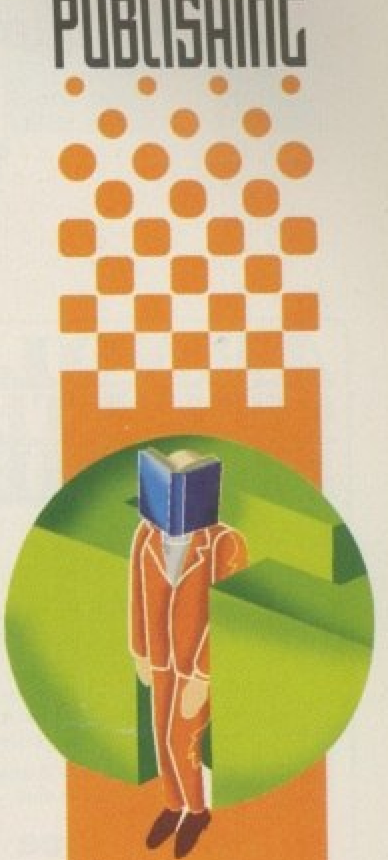
AliWeb – another Web page searcher. Not as dynamic as the others but occasionally it comes up with a link the others miss. A search engine is only any good if people post their web address to it.
http://web.nexor.co.uk/public/aliweb/search/doc/form.html

Richard G. L'Hommedieu, Jr. Home Page – although not a search engine as such, it does have the best collection of Amiga graphics links anywhere on the Web, as far as I can see. It's a well maintained site and Richard seems to know his onions. And 3D programs. And he looks good in a dress. (I was kidding about the dress part.)
http://www.pb.net/~limg



Bursting the bubble

Following on from the discussion a couple of months ago, Frank Nord looks at some structured clip art



Howdy folks. This month I'm going to take a break from the normal tutorial format of this column and have a look at a collection of structured clip art for Amigas. If you remember, back in issue 88 we had a look at the differences between structured (otherwise known as vector) and bitmapped clip art. We also had a look at the various formats supported by Amiga software, and the collection I am looking at today is all in EPS format. This means you should be able to use it in Final Writer, ProPage, PageStream, and many other packages. If your program is like ProPage, all you will see on screen is a box, but Final Writer and PageStream both have the ability to let you see the graphic as it really is.

Even if the software you use doesn't support EPS format clip art, all is not lost as Artworks – the company that produces the clip art – kindly supplies an IFF ILBM version of the clips for use in programs like DPaint and the like. The set Artworks have supplied me with is the second volume in a three set series – Badges, Banners, Bubbles and Bursts – but they have also sent me the manuals for the other two volumes, Frames, Corners, Strips and Motifs, and Signs and Symbols.

HIGH QUALITY

The quality of all the clipart in each volume is outstanding, with some very useful images – credit card symbols in the Signs and Symbols volume being particularly handy for laying out your own adverts, etc. Each volume is accompanied, as I have already said, by an eight-page manual which shows a greyscale printout of every clip included in each collection. The clips are organised into directories and then numbered, so you will need to make sure you keep the manual in a safe place if you are to have any idea which clip you are using.

Each volume also comes with useful advice for Final Writer users, explaining how to display a proper image rather than a cross box, and reminding the user that EPS images can take a long time to load and print for unaccelerated Amiga owners. Hmm, perhaps I should have said 'owners of unaccelerated Amigas' instead... no, I'll leave it the way it is.

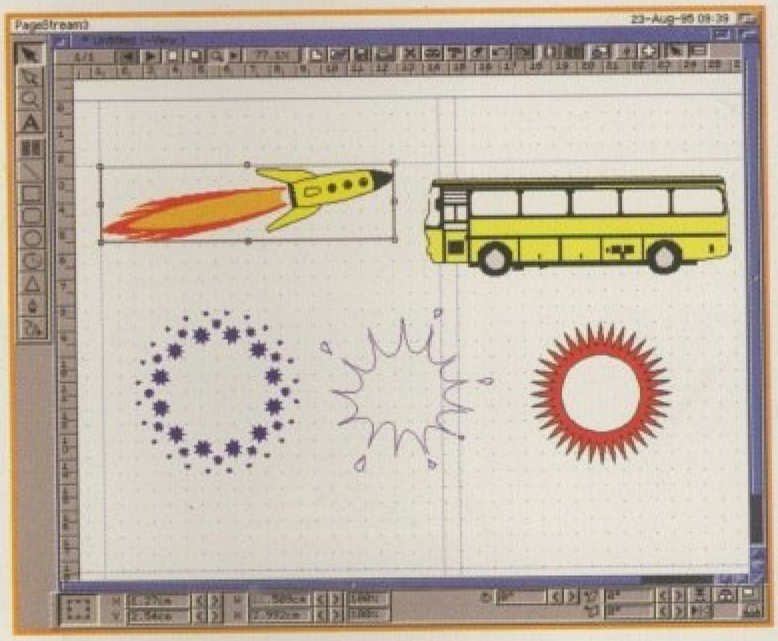
The bitmapped versions of the clip art are somewhat disappointing as they are only usable at screen resolution. I was really rather hoping for big bitmaps that could be scaled down to print at printer resolution, but I guess Artworks is only really offering the bitmaps as a sop to Amiga owners not willing to part with the necessary dosh to get software that **is** EPS-compatible. The volumes are also available in ProDraw format for those who cling to Gold Disk's products, and each set retails at £19.95 singly or £17.50 if you buy two or more.

Another piece of software that recently hit my doormat which is partially related to DTP, but is also useful systemwide, is Gordon Fecyk's ATM. Yes, it's a system patch to allow any program to use PostScript type 1 fonts, but no, ATM **doesn't** stand for Adobe Typo Manager, Adobe being too shortsighted to allow Gordon to use their name. So ATM stood for Amiga Typeface Manager. But Adobe didn't like that, so now Gordon has changed the name to ATE – Amiga Typeface Engine.

The patch uses the famous Post.library and is quite simple and transparent to all software that also works with CG fonts. And although ATE is still at a beta stage as I write this, it is actually faster than the way CG fonts get calculated and displayed. If you want to contact Gordon with a view to having a look at his software, or to express your support in his fight with Adobe, then drop him a line:
gordonf@freenet.vancouver.bc.ca

Lastly, there should be a datatype on our CoverDisk this month that will prove useful to desktop publishers. Datatypes are, of course, only usable if you have Workbench 3.0 or above, but since Workbench 3.1 offers some great advances over Workbench 2, especially for graphics card owners, I expect most of you reading the column will be able to use the datatype. The datatype in question allows you to view complete character sets for a font, a type preview if you will, and since you can save a picture out as IFF from Multiview, this tool should be a nice way of creating a library of type previews.

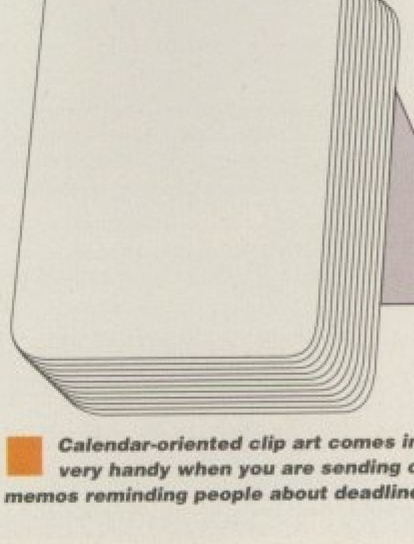
It is also very handy to check for the existence, or non-existence, of certain diacritic marks like copyright symbols, quotation marks and accented letters which are often not put into shareware fonts. Obviously, this datatype is really only for use with standard CG and bitmapped fonts, and I haven't had the chance to try it with ATE yet, but if it can deal with postscript fonts as well, it would be very handy. Of course, if you are running PageStream 3, you have still got the type preview macro to use for a high quality print out of all the postscript fonts in your system.



Travel, bursts, oh yes, it's all here



...And the first prize goes to Artworks



Calendar-oriented clip art comes in very handy when you are sending out memos reminding people about deadlines

Font o' the month

For a long time now it has been common practice in magazines that have a section devoted to DTP to have a font of the month, so from this month onwards, I will be looking for good, unusual or simply odd fonts to be included in the selection. This deal is open to anyone designing a bitmapped or outline typeface and extra marks will go to entries that incorporate a family of fonts. Send your fonts to Frank Nord, c/o Amiga Computing, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP

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Phil South shows you how to emulate cheesy old arcade game techniques



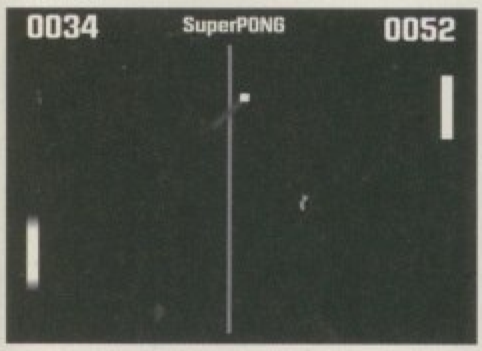
I'm always getting letters asking me how to do this or that in Amos, like 'How can I write a game of Defender?' or 'can you show me how to emulate the bouncing palls in Ping Pong?', or 'How do you do that trick with the characters de-rezzing in Robotron?' I tell you, it's a never ending struggle for sanity in this house. What is worse is that half the time, people don't want to know how to code, they want me to write the program for them and put it on the disk they send me. Forget it, buster! It's my job to teach people how to code, not do the work for them. Tsk! Some people.

But just when I was resolved never to do the dirty work for anyone again, I got a letter from an a Amiga Computing reader – R Bellows of Edinburgh – who asked: "I've tried as hard as I can to make a ball bounce around the screen like it does in Pong or those Arkanoid clones. How do you do it so it looks good?" Okay, all right, I give up. Here is my way.

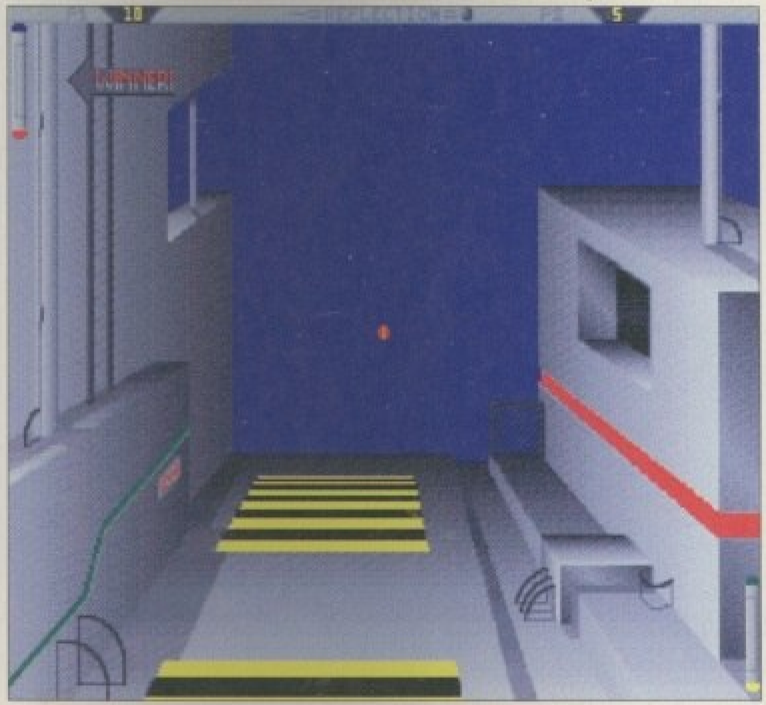
Pong, or Ping Pong, was one of the first games ever devised as a computer or video game, and it was certainly the first video game I owned, I don't know about you – but then I'm sad and old. The thing which always fascinated me about the game was the way the ball bounced around the screen. It seemed to simulate a real ball bouncing around, which of course is incorrect because real balls bounce in three dimensions not two. But as a 2D game of ping pong it wasn't at all bad.

It was quite a few years later that a friend of mine, I think it was probably Aaron Fothergill, showed me how to compute bouncing things with vectors. The example is as follows:

```
Curs Off : Hide : Flash Off : Cls 0 : Ink 4,4 :
Paper 0
Input "X Vector ";DX#
Input "Y Vector ";DY#
Cls 0 : Bar 0,0 To 3,3
Get Bob 1,0,0 To 4,4
Cls 0
X#=160 : Y#=100
While X#>0 and X#<320 and Y#>0 and Y#<200
          Bob 1,X#,Y#,1
          Wait Vbl
          X#=X#+DX#
          Y#=Y#+DY#
Wend
End
```



Pong was one of the first computer games



Ping Pong doesn't have to be just mono and two dimensional

You begin by specifying the start X and Y direction between -8 and 8, and this tells the sprite which way to go. Learning how the vectors behave in two dimensions is one way of learning how to compute them in 3D, which makes for some pretty fancy 3D game ideas.

A separate routine, which is sort of related to that, is the Flip Flop, where a value is flipped one way and back again. Try this:

```
X=1 : DX=1
Curs Off : Flash Off : Cls 0
Ink 4,4
Bar 0,0 To 15,15
Get Bob 1,0,0 To 16,16
Cls 0
Double Buffer
Do
   Bob 1,X,100,1
   Wait Vbl
   X=X+DX
   If X<=0 or X>=319
             DX=-DX
   End If
Loop
```

This is a simple example of bouncing a ball on the side of the screen. Add these things together and what have you got? A lot of code which doesn't go together to make a game? Yes, you'd be right there. But you have the seed of a game. You have a couple of processes that work. All you need to do is to put them together. You can't? Doh! Do I have to do everything? Okay...

You set the sprite off in a random direction from the centre of the 'court', okay. You do this simply by making the input values to the vector random. Next, you check the sprite via collision detection and checking the numbers:

```
X=0 or X=320
```

to see if it hits the bat or a goal line. If it hits the roof or the floor, the top and bottom of the screen, you simply flip the Y co-ordinate so it is going in the opposite direction. So imagine the ball is going up to the top at 45 degrees. Both the X and Y co-ordinates are increasing. Then the ball hits the side. Flip flop the Y co-ordinate and make it go down and the ball appears to bounce off the roof of the court.

Okay, Pong me!

Let's see your Pong games then. Write a game based on the principles we've discussed, and write a simple Pong game. Add a scoring mechanism, a method of repeating rounds and starting a new game or finishing the game all together, and put it on a disk. It shouldn't be terribly long, so I'll print the best ones in a future issue. To give you a little incentive, the best one gets a copy of my book 'Mastering Amiga AMOS', and if you're particularly unlucky I'll sign it too. That'll teach you.

Write stuff

If you have any other Amos programs or queries about Amos, then please write to the usual address, which is: Phil South, Amos Column, Amiga Computing, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Please send routines on an Amiga disk with notes on how the program works on paper, not as text files on the disk. Make the routines short enough to appear in print, i.e. no more than about 30-40 lines of code, and if possible make them use no external graphics. If they can't be used without them then be sure to provide them on the disk in native IFF format, and the same goes for sound files. Follow these guidelines and you'll be sure of making me a happy man if nothing else.

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A gem of a mixer

Paul Overaa takes a look at a sound mixer designed specifically for use with the Amiga



Most people would agree that, quality-wise, listening to internal sound-based music through most Amiga monitors leaves a little to be desired. The addition of multimedia-style speakers helps quite a bit but to be honest, some of the offerings currently available have quite limited tone control circuitry. This, coupled with the fairly mediocre speakers that are normally provided, usually means that even once you've added a separate speaker system there is still room for improvement.

In most cases, all that's needed to improve things are simply some better signal EQ (equalisation) facilities. Boosting the bass and treble end of a signal, for instance, can provide some extra 'punch' that brings music to life. If you can also control the signal level being fed into the speaker system, it's often possible to further improve the sound quality.



The Little Gem mixer

This is exactly where a unit called the Little Gem comes into its own. It's a small (7.5cm(W) x14cm(H) x3cm(D) two channel audio mixer that provides independent gain, high and low frequency boost and cut, and left/right pan controls. The two input and two output connectors are phono socket type (i.e. the same as the Amiga uses) so when using the unit for sound output control, it's just a matter of connecting the Amiga's sound terminals to the Little Gem via a stereo phono lead (not supplied) and connecting the Little Gem outputs to your existing multimedia sound system.

The unit itself is powered by a 9v PP3 battery and you do need to remember to switch the unit off after use, otherwise current will continue to be drawn. Mains operation is also possible via most everyday regulated power supplies, and the Little Gem will operate satisfactorily anywhere between 9-18 volts DC, and accepts any polarity.

And that's basically it – you place the Little Gem into your signal line and bingo, you instantly get much improved signal level and tone control. The other advantage of course is that you also get full control over left/right stereo panning which is particularly useful for removing hard left or right instrument panning in a song. If, say, all the percussion/drums or a bass line of a song had been placed on the left stereo channel, you could use the pan control to bring those instruments nearer to the centre of the 'stereo stage', in all likelihood producing a more natural overall sound output.

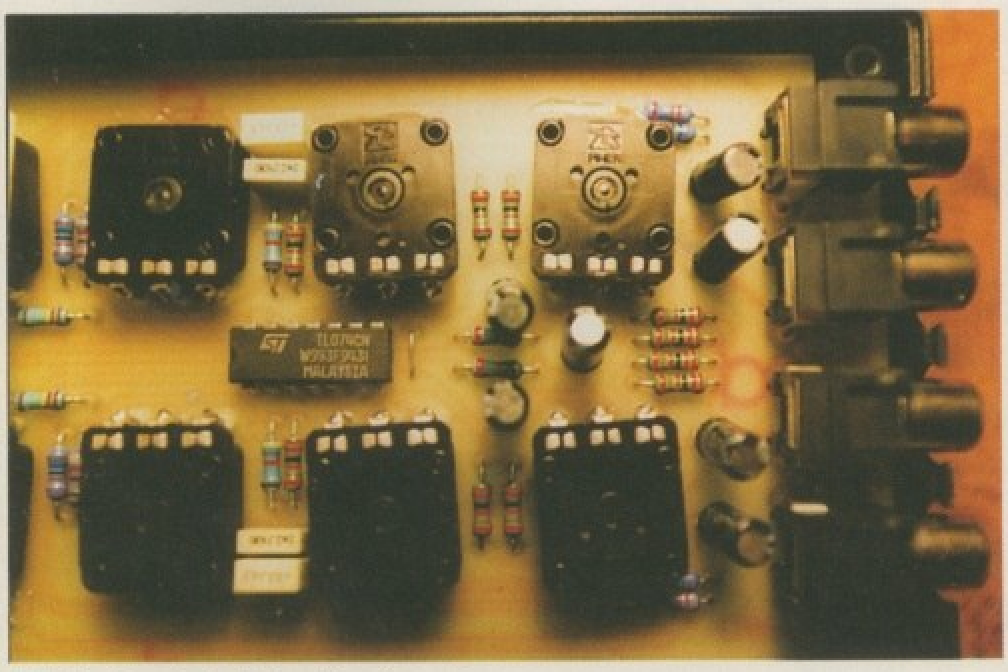
There are other uses for the Little Gem as well. Most sound samplers, for example, have little or no signal EQ facilities, so unless the sound source itself provides these, you're stuck with sampling whatever signal arrives at the sampler. Put the Little Gem between the source and the sampler, however, and you can then process the sound before it enters the sampler – and this often allows you to improve the quality of the resulting sample.

Though fairly expensive (relative to the prices of many of the Amiga sound systems around), the Little Gem has made a good impression. The construction inside is of reasonable quality and in practice the mixing circuitry works well. Equally important, the Little Gem has very low noise levels (in fact it's as good as some mixers costing ten times the price).

In short, if you have any doubts about whether you're getting the best possible output from your existing Amiga sound system or not, the chances are you aren't – and the Little Gem could provide the perfect solution!

What's it got?

- **2 channel in, 2 channel out**
- **Hi and lo EQ to +/- 12 dB**
- **Pan controls for stereo positioning of channels**
- **Battery or mains operation – takes no power from the Amiga**
- **Suitable for all Amiga models**



The internal circuit board layout looks to be reasonably good

The bottom line

Product: Little Gem Micro Mixer
Price: £69-95 incl UK p&p
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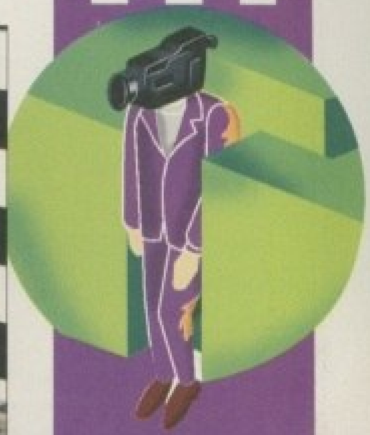
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Step into the light

Gary Whiteley explains basic lighting for 3D rendering

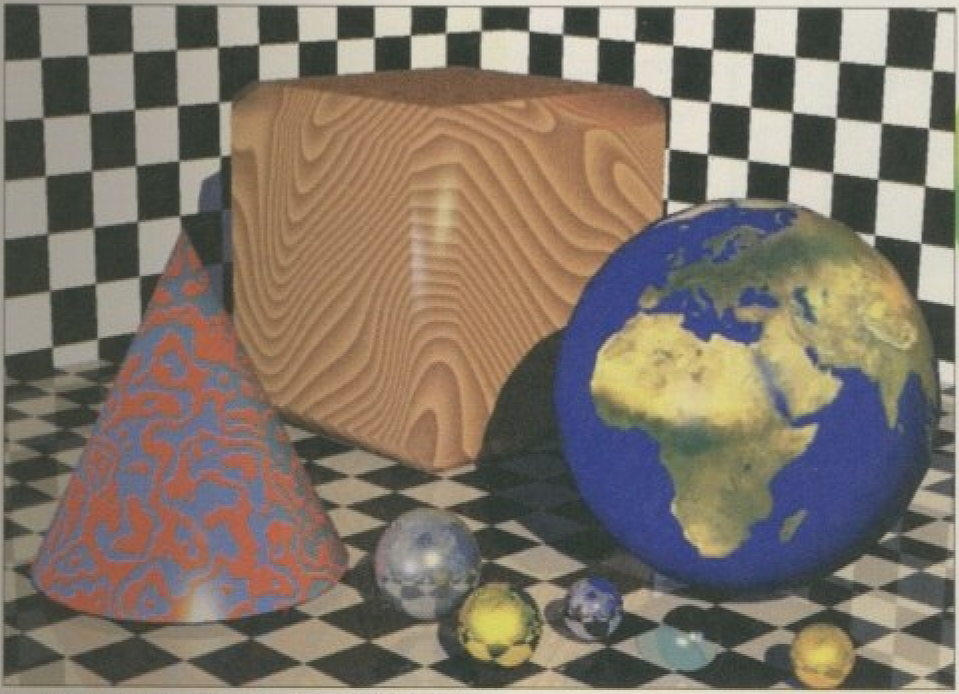


While 3D programs like LightWave, Real 3D and Imagine can flaunt the laws of Physics and produce scenes impossible in the real world, when it comes to lighting a scene realistically there's a lot to be learned from natural, as well as theatrical, film and television lighting.

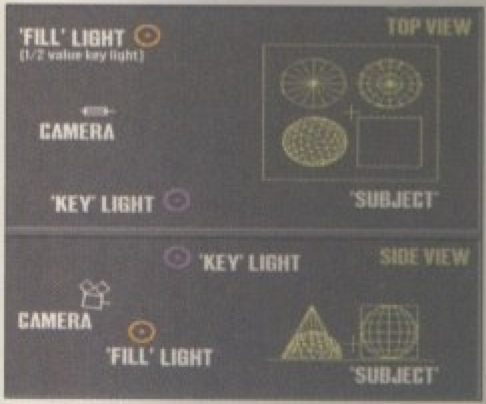
In the real world, at least during daytime, there is one predominant light source – the Sun. The way in which it lights our world is affected by various factors such as the angle of the sun in the sky, cloud and fog (and, increasingly, pollution), objects casting shadows – be they trees, buildings or mountains – the angle an object presents to the Sun, the surface characteristics of illuminated objects, and the manner in which light enters buildings and other environments.

Unlike artificial lights, our relative proximity to the Sun and the strength of its light means there is little perceptible fall-off of the light intensity with distance, though of course like all real light sources, the Sun's light actually decreases in strength the further it travels away from its source.

The Sun, while really a 'point' source of light, can be regarded on Earth as a parallel light source because of the great distances involved. Parallel light sources emit rays which all travel in the same direction, hence the term 'parallel', and because of the great distances involved and the small area of Earth in relation to the Sun's light output, the rays which hit the Earth are effectively parallel rays. Sunlight is also scattered by the physical environment it passes through, including the atmosphere, providing an ambient light which adds a degree of 'fill' light to a scene. 3D renderers allow the user to define both 'normal' and ambient light sources.



Great-looking images can be obtained if you follow a few simple lighting rules



A basic Key and Fill lighting setup. Keep the ambient light to a minimum

So you can see that the simplest 'real world' situation can be lit with just a distant light source to represent the Sun and some ambient light to add natural fill. To enhance this a little, try adjusting the colours of the Sun and the ambient light away from the default white or grey settings. One interesting combination is orange-yellow sunlight (e.g. R255 G220 B150) and blueish ambient light (try R150 G150 B185), especially when shadows are also rendered. Experiment with other combinations to add a different mood to your renders.

Contact point

Gary Whiteley can be e-mailed as drgaz@cix.compulink.co.uk.

Artificial light

When it comes to interior scenes a new lighting pattern is needed, since the Sun is no longer likely to be the main light source, if indeed it is present at all. In this case we need to simulate the effect of the Sun with a 'Key' light (so-called because it is the main light source), but it is also usual practice to add one or more extra lights to provide fill to soften up the shadows caused by the key light and to enhance detail in the otherwise dark areas caused by using a single light source.

The key light is the brightest light source in the setup and is usually a point or distant (parallel) light source which is set to cast shadows. Place it to one side of the camera, about 30 degrees above and at a reasonable distance from the main centre of attention. The absolute distance of the key light from the subject depends on the strength of the light and the 3D package you are using. In Imagine, a distance of at least 1000 units for a R200, G200, B200 light is recommended.

The Fill light is around half the brightness of the key light, set on a level with the main subject on the opposite side of the camera to the key light, but at an equivalent distance from the subject. It is usual for this light to be set to cast NO shadows. Sometimes a second fill light will be placed behind and to the left of the main subject to provide more soft fill. Again, vary the colour of the lights away from the standard default settings for more interesting results.

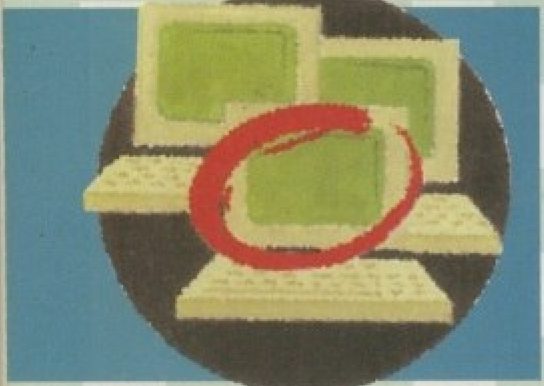
Once the key and fill lights have been positioned, the rest of the room/environment can be lit accordingly. Perhaps there are wall or other incidental lights, or maybe a small window. These shouldn't contribute much to the main lighting setup but they should add interest to the background and illuminate the rest of the scene to produce the desired effect. You can also add some ambient light, but remember to keep it to a minimum to avoid flooding out your main lights.

There will be situations where the key light might be a large, well-lit window in a building, for example. In this case, position a fill light where it most effectively softens the shadows and yet still enhances the detail of the scene. Try different positions for the fill light until you find one which produces the most pleasing results.

Obviously, there are too many variations to go into here, so don't be afraid to experiment. If you want more ideas, use the resources of your local library and read up on film, theatrical and photographic lighting to get more insight into lighting your 3D worlds.

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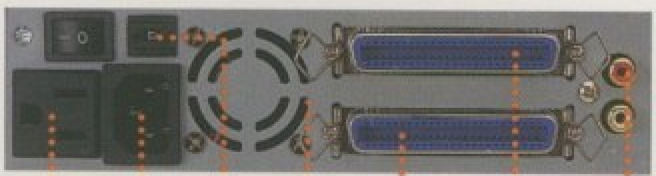
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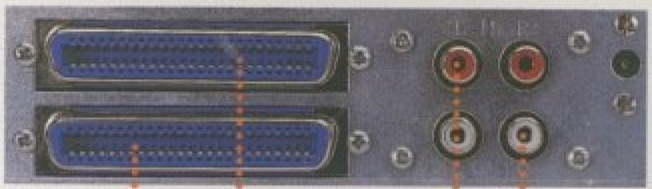
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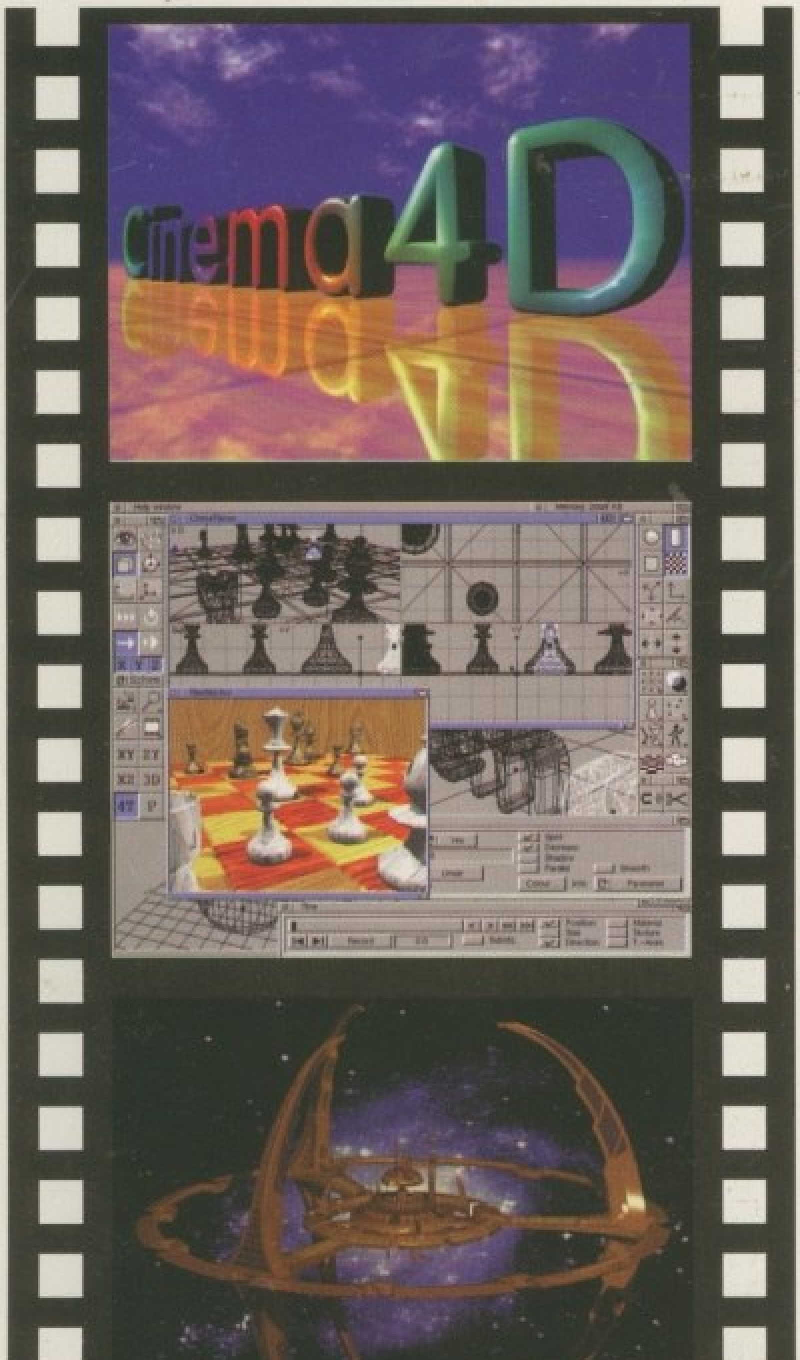
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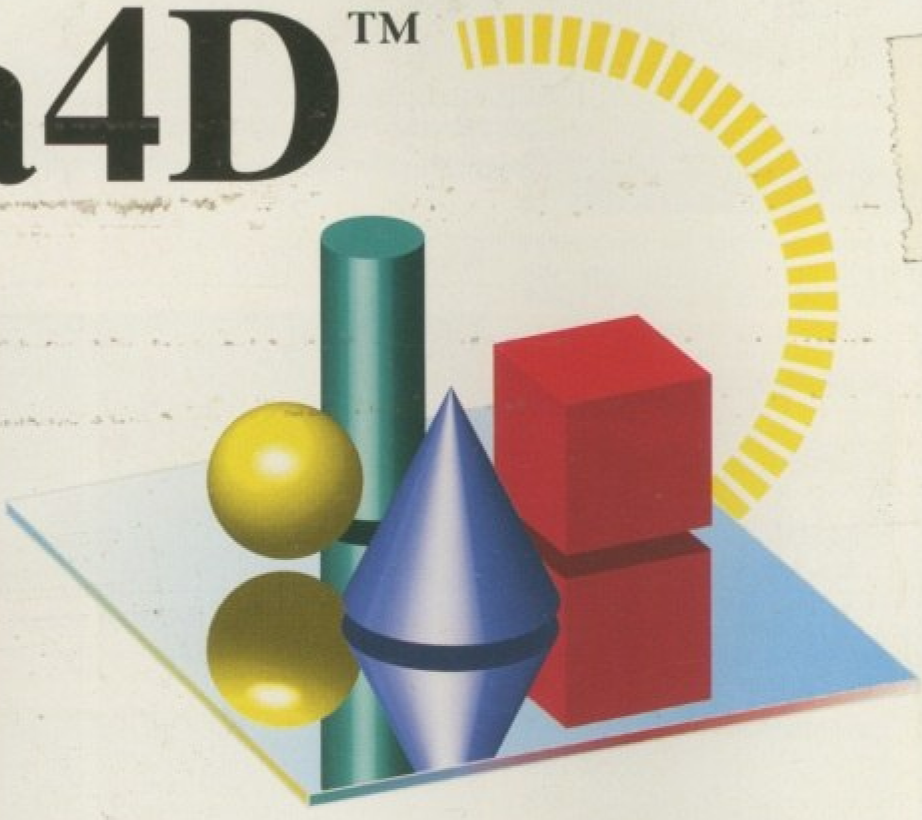
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